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69 **HOT NEW GAMES**

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Star Wars Special

New games reviewed, plus: Phantom Menace the way it should have been

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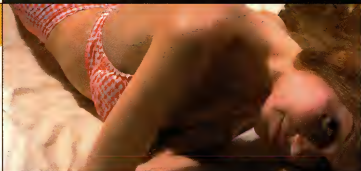
AUGUST 99

FEATURES

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THE GAMES OF SUMMER

Survive the dog days with previews of the newest and hottest games with PCXL-style word searches and crosswords. Hide this feature, lest grandma picks it up instead of her Daily Jumble — and faints



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PCXL Senior Editor Emeritus Dan Egger explores the Nerdvana that is E3, with an insiders' guide on how outsiders "get in." But you'll need protection — and we're not talking firearms



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We talk face to chest ... er ... face, with the newest *Tomb Raider* model. See how she, ahem, "stacks up" with the polygonal Lara



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X-TRA

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X-tropolitan is here to cure your summer blues. Find out what's really going down in Dallas, learn how to write your own preview, and discover if your girl is cheating on you



ON THE COVER

Lies, lies, lies ... like any normal man would play games while a hot girl in a bikini is right next to him — unless they were married. This cover was conceived in the backseat of a '76 Chevrolet Corvette and photographed by the incomparable Ed Fox. Makeup by Josef Saunders. Cleavage control by Eric Smith (lucky bastard). Models are Jennifer Lookatmyface and some random guy who wasn't too effeminate

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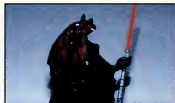


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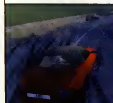
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74 DESCENT 3
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A GREAT ISSUE ... FOR ME TO POOP ON



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Triumph The Insult Comic Dog, Joan Rivers, Farrah Fawcett, Burt Reynolds, Troy Aikman, Melissa Rivers, Don Knotts, Ricky Martin, Michelle Pfeiffer, Leather Tuscadero, Jerry Seinfeld, Brandy, Mike Meyers, Bill Clinton, Matthew Lillard, Freddie Prince Jr., Hard-Ass Girl, Jordan Knight, David Hasselhoff, Michael Irvin, Anna Kournikova, Mike Tyson, Dennis Rodman, Sasquatch, Mark Fuhrman, Rodney King, Edmund L, Charles II, and many more

THE DISCS



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Here's two of 'em and they're bloody loaded with games, mate. Blimey, you jammie gits, what do we have to do to please ya, ladies?

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FROSTLESS

ENERGY



SAVER



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ACTIVISION

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Our disc, in the middle of our sleeve
Our disc, in the middle of our ...

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LEGEND

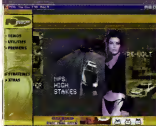
- DEMO
- PATCHES
- TOOLS
- A/V
- MAPS
- RATING

DISC

	SILVER
	BRAVEHEART
	NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES
	RE-VOLT
	THRUST, TWIST 'N TURN
	PEACEMAKER
	BREAKNECK
	HELL-COPTER
	LINKS EXTREME
	SHADOW COMPANY
	BATTLECRUISER 3000 A.D. V.2.0

DISC

	QUAKE II
	TRIBES
	HALF-LIFE
	X-WING: ALLIANCE
	NHL '99
	QUAKE
	REQUIEM
	STARCRRAFT
	TRIPLE PLAY 2000
	SIN
	HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2000
	HERETIC II
	NBA LIVE '99
	GAMESPY



Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, which is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. If this is too complicated or you lack the motor skills, then the bar on the left can be used as well. Click left on the mouse to select items and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, then the rest should be elementary.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98, PENTIUM 133MHz, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

Q: I subscribe to PC Games, now I get PCXL, which is a far superior publication in every way, shape and form, but now I get no disc. What gives?

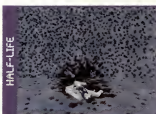
A: Call 800-333-3890 to get your double disc goodies

Q: Who's the disc babe for the month?

A: Ms. Catherine Zeta-Jones

Q: Who's going to win the NBA Finals? (date of question: June 15)

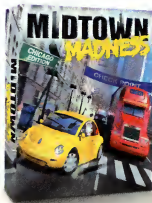
A: Knicks all the way!





0-60 (off a skyscraper)? Yes.

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Microsoft

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July '99



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PCXL Summer School

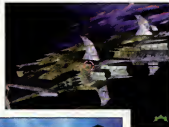
Did you notice something? No, not the girl in the bikini, but it's kinda related. Did you notice that it was summer? Big yellow bright thing in the middle of the wide expanse of blue? That's the sky, and no, it's not the bright blue sky of Norrath (*Everquest*, for the unacquainted). Any idea what it means? Look back to the girl in the bikini (as if you haven't sneaked another glance so far). This kind of vision is at a beach near you — okay stay with me people, that's the big yellow sandy land at the edge of the ocean.

So why, given that information, should you give a rat's ass about any of the PC games heading your way soon? Well, because the quality is high, the quantity sufficient to ensure that a few great games get completely overlooked, and because admit it — you're gaming geeks. The question is, how much of a geek?

Time to take the PCXL test ... How closely have you been reading our past issues? How much time have you spent ogling young beauties such as the one here, as opposed to reading our in-depth gaming prose? It's all laid bare in this entertaining, yet informative, bikini babe-illustrated quiz. Pick up your pencils, you have as long as you'd like. Good luck! (And Salmon, keep your eyes on your own paper.)



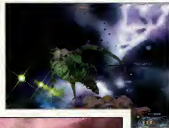
Star Trek:
Klingon Academy



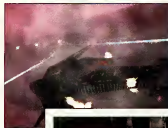
Babylon 5



Independence
War Deluxe



Sinistar



Freespace 2



Tachyon:
The Fringe



Battlecruiser
3020 AD



Starlancer

QUESTION #1

Match the following screenshots to the latest batch of space flight sims. Note: Double points awarded for each correct answer, since telling these games apart is about as difficult as telling the Barbi twins apart.

DEVELOPER → Novalogic PUBLISHER → Novalogic

RELEASE DATE → November '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → After the initial design was reassessed, it's tough to say. A two-sided (GalSpan Mega-Corporation versus the Bora Rebel Settlers) open-ended campaign structure has the potential to offer a wide variety of experiences in the varied and upgradeable ships.

OPINION → May struggle against more auspicious competition if those standout features aren't fully realized. The NovaWorld mass-multiplayer dogfights should be entertaining and varied given the different ship types and upgrade options.

POTENTIAL RATING → Low

DEVELOPER → Digital Anvil PUBLISHER → Microsoft

WHAT IS IT → See preview, page 52

DEVELOPER → 3000 A.D., Inc. PUBLISHER → TBD

RELEASE DATE → Late '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → BC3K (as it's known) has a history like no other. The full feature set of the updated Win 95 version is still under wraps, but includes promised advanced neural net AI to support the dynamic, open-ended setting. The neovending plotline of mammoth space exploration has real potential if all the technical jiggery-pokery works.

OPINION → Who can tell? BC3K was initially an unmitigated disaster, though the patched version 2.0 was good. Early screens look good, but there's too little real information to make a call.

POTENTIAL RATING → Anyone's guess

DEVELOPER → Sierra Studios PUBLISHER → Sierra

RELEASE DATE → December '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → An incredibly detailed graphics engine will scale as high as your hardware will go, with current systems running an early version quite happily at 1600x1200. This likely means that the TV show's mammoth CGI ships and stations will be recreated in painstaking accuracy.

OPINION → A powerful license and the support of Babylonian Productions who create the TV series will certainly ensure B3 is faithful to the show. Also, moving through the ranks and commanding the mammoth capital ships should add an intriguing strategic element.

POTENTIAL RATING → High

DEVELOPER → Volition PUBLISHER → Interplay

RELEASE DATE → Winter '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → It's 32 years after the Great War, and all is not well. Over 30 new missions will feature over 70 ships with additions to the fabric of space spicing up the dogfighting. That means nebulae will create hiding places, interfere with communications and weapon systems, and generally make the whole thing more interesting.

OPINION → The original was amazingly immersive, with in-game chatter with wingmen as realistic as it had ever been. That's to be expanded with greater options and greater pilot intelligence (theirs, not yours).

POTENTIAL RATING → Highly promising

DEVELOPER → Particle Systems PUBLISHER → Infogrames

RELEASE DATE → Summer '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → This Deluxe edition contains the original critically acclaimed I-War, plus 18 new missions, a new Defiance campaign for a total of 60 detailed, story driven missions.

OPINION → While perhaps not as technically advanced as some of its competition, and sporting less style in the interface, I-War more than makes up for it in game depth. The story, set in 2268 is deep and involving as you pilot your 'sco' starship for the Independent Fleet against the Commonwealth Navy.

POTENTIAL RATING → Medium

DEVELOPER → 14 Degrees East PUBLISHER → Interplay

RELEASE DATE → Winter '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → After Starfleet Academy comes the chance to ride the Federation a new one as a promising cadet learning the ropes of the Klingon fleet from General Chang (Christopher Plummer reprising his role from ST V). A new engine will let you command the slow moving ships into combat, and also take the gunnery position to get down and dirty with the virtual fed ships (it's only an Academy simulator, after all).

OPINION → Since it's always good to play the bad guys, KA already has a leg up. Having 10 new Klingon weapons should be fun as you command up to seven of the nine featured ships against a variety of foes.

POTENTIAL RATING → Hoping for good things

DEVELOPER → GameFX Technology PUBLISHER → THQ

RELEASE DATE → Fall '99

STANDOUT FEATURES → Began development as an offshoot of 3Dfx, this shooter promises a purely visceral arcade experience. A promised 24 single-player levels will dazzle with eye-candy galore as you blow away the 25 enemy types with any of the nine weapons from whichever of the six craft you choose.

OPINION → As 3Dfx and Voodoo technology burst on the scene, this game looked like a banner product. But technology has moved on and others have caught up, though the look is still spectacular.

POTENTIAL RATING → Unlikely to worry the chart keepers

QUESTION #2

If music be the food of press coverage, sign-up. Which bands are supplying the soundtracks to the following games, allegedly increasing their profile and marketability?



"I think PCXL readers are soooooo dreamy!"



Vanessa Paradis



David Bowie



Marilyn Manson

Omikron

DEVELOPER → Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER → Eidos

RELEASE DATE → Late 2000

WHAT IS IT → Third-person action adventure

STANDOUT FEATURES → A Total Recall-esque storyline (complete with pretend wife — though not Sharon Stone) is backed by a Messiah-like ability to inhabit the bodies of other people throughout the game. A detailed futuristic city sports a couple of mo-cap'd strippers at a titty bar — and that's always good for a few points with the PCXL staff.

OPINION → The delays should allow them to get the best 'em up action down, and work on the planned realistic AI that currently runs scripted movements to keep the action pace up.

POTENTIAL RATING → Typical French style is a definite plus. On the other hand, typically French gameplay is worrisome



Samantha Fox



Kajagoogoo



Devo

Interstate '82

DEVELOPER → Activision

PUBLISHER → Activision

RELEASE DATE → Late '99

WHAT IS IT → Vehicle-based action sim

STANDOUT FEATURES → A long time in coming, this return to an alternate universe '82 should essentially be a bigger, prettier, better version of the excellent I-76. It's had its problems though, with the planned motorcycles and helicopter flying being canned.

OPINION → The buzz has dipped dramatically and its punch seems to have lost momentum. Plus we're scared that sport jackets and Don Johnson should ever seem cool again.

POTENTIAL RATING → A big question mark



Yes



Grateful Dead



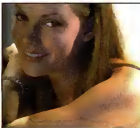
Olivia Newton-John

Homeworld

DEVELOPER → Relic Entertainment

PUBLISHER → Sierra

DETAILS → See Preview, page 70



"I wanna rock 'n' roll all night... and party every day."



Cypress Hill



Shania Twain



Coolio

Kingpin

DEVELOPER → Xatrix

PUBLISHER → Interplay

RELEASE DATE → Fall '99

WHAT IS IT → First-person gang sim

STANDOUT FEATURES → Getting down and really, really dirty in a tale of gangland violence that pulls no punches. Based on a modified version of the Quake II engine, the action will be bloody, with bullets causing entry and exit wounds, and limbs detaching themselves from their thick-necked hosts.

OPINION → Pushing the taste envelope to breaking point (and possibly beyond), there's no doubting that Kingpin is going to get attention — good and bad.

POTENTIAL RATING → Likely to end up with a fanatical cult following and become the target of certain politicians



They Might Be Giants



Mark Snow



Britney Spears

Giants

DEVELOPER → Planet Moon

PUBLISHER → Interplay

RELEASE DATE → September '99

WHAT IS IT → Action and strategy

STANDOUT FEATURES → Amazing graphics, three unique races (a huge giant, nekkid sea chick and little duces) and the kind of quirky style that made MDK such a critical success.

OPINION → One of the stars of this year's E3, it's the little touches (like the Giant saving his dinner for later by impaling it on its tusk) that could really give it a place of its own in the fight for holiday season marketing.

POTENTIAL RATING → Game should be great, but will it sell?



Poison



Jennifer Lopez



KISS

KISS Psycho Circus: The Nightmare Child

DEVELOPER → Third Law

PUBLISHER → god

RELEASE DATE → Mid 2000

WHAT IS IT → First-person shooter

STANDOUT FEATURES → Based on Todd MacFarlane's comic books, and with the backing of some KISS tunes, this horror adventure certainly has plenty of names attached. Four realms, all wracked by a serious evil, need to be cleansed. Promising to be "a friggin' blood-bath," it's time to don the suits of the four "heroic" characters KISS made world famous.

OPINION → Little has been released to highlight the promised gore and potentially incredible visuals. And judging from the developers' backgrounds, Ion Storm employees, it may never be released.

POTENTIAL RATING → Promising, but too soon to call



QUESTION #3

Which of the following games are using Id's sparkling *Quake III* engine?

Answer: _____

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force

DEVELOPER → Raven Software PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Early 2000
OPINION → Incredibly detailed modeling of the Voyager ship, and a fascinating premise that allows the inclusion of races from outside the Voyager milieu gives Raven the chance of hitting where all previous Star Trek action games have missed.

Daikatana

DEVELOPER → Ion Storm PUBLISHER → Eidos
RELEASE DATE → Sept '99
OPINION → Even Rob's faith in them getting it all right is waning. Will the game ever ship, and can it be even half as good as *Half-Life*?

QUESTION #4

Which new puzzle game, in the vein of the classic *Lemmings*, requiring you to herd a bunch of unruly sheep through 16 different settings, does the following character appear?



Quake III: Arena

DEVELOPER → Id PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Late '99
OPINION → Carmack's new engine uses curved surfaces, all-new lighting, and great color use with 32-bit textures. The arcade style gameplay of the test was pure visceral carnage. Excellent.

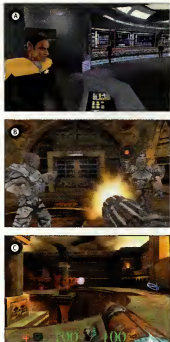
The Unknown James Bond game from EA

DEVELOPER → EA PUBLISHER → EA
RELEASE DATE → Late 2000
OPINION → Nothing has been revealed, so our speculation is that it will be a *Goldeneye* (N64) style action game, with detailed strategy elements, and possibly tied to the *World Is Not Enough* movie due out in November.

QUESTION #5

Which one of the following first-person shooters did PCXL unveil to the world for the first time in the April '99 issue?

Answer: _____



Unreal Tournament

DEVELOPER → Epic Games PUBLISHER → GT Interactive RELEASE DATE → September '99 OPINION → Disappeared from radars amidst GT's troubles, our last look certainly whetted the appetite. The *Unreal* engine is getting better all the time, and the variation in game types — with *Saving Private Ryan*-inspired beach invasions, Capture the Flag and a variety of others — should set the online world alight when it finally ships.

Half-Life: Opposing Force

DEVELOPER → Gearbox Software PUBLISHER → Sierra RELEASE DATE → December '99 OPINION → After Rebel Boat Racer had their *Prax Wor* canned by EA, they formed Gearbox and got the nod for this expansion to the Game of the Year. Now you're a marine sent in to clean up the mess of the original, but faced with the mystery man poking his nose in, and another alien invasion possibility. Six new chapters and seven new weapons constitute the core additions to a product, set to be about 40% the size of the original. New deathmatch maps will also be included.

Amen: The Awakening

DEVELOPER → Cavegood PUBLISHER → GT Interactive RELEASE DATE → March 2000 OPINION → Bishop Six is a British former SAS star that has his family murdered by the Afflicted. This bunch — a third of the world's population — suddenly go apeshit on Christmas Eve 2032. Finding out what happened, how, why, and then fixing it is all part of the job, covering some highly detailed real world settings. Carefully constructed interactive scripted events should create some show-stopping moments as buildings collapse, and the bizarre behavior of the Afflicted takes over.

Delta Force 2

DEVELOPER → Novalogic PUBLISHER → Novalogic RELEASE DATE → Late fall '99 OPINION → An update, rather than whole new game, *DF2* features new mission types and weapons, plus more detailed, realistic terrains, with long grass added, letting you crawl in full voxelicious cover.

High Noon

DEVELOPER → Six Shooter Studios PUBLISHER → TBD RELEASE DATE → TBD OPINION → Garnered a lot of interest after PCXL unveiled the concept of the design doc that these guys were developing. The power of the LithTech 2.0 engine is impressive, and should hopefully let Six Shooter pull off the ambitious plans for its western-based shooter.

No One Lives Forever

DEVELOPER → Monolith PUBLISHER → Monolith RELEASE DATE → Fall 2000 OPINION → Way early, but the concept of a campy Bond spoof featuring such ingenious weaponry as the rocket launching briefcase has to hold promise. Showing off the abilities of LithTech 2.0, this shooter lends itself to comparisons with the N64 *Goldeneye*, but with a ridiculous, humorous stab at Britain's Her Majesty's Most Secret Service. Adam Church works for MI-Zero and will mine through the '60s decor of 33 missions. Definitely one to watch.

Soldier of Fortune

DEVELOPER → Raven Software PUBLISHER → Activision RELEASE DATE → Late '99 OPINION → One of the high-lights of E3, this first-person shooter is looking hot. The GHOU system of hit location is taking shape, making enemies wince when pegged. Add a mix-and-match method of showing different intestinal arrangements when a shotgun blast exposes them to the elements, and this is looking like one of the bloodiest and most compelling shooters of the year.



QUESTION #6

If you're going to get in to any roleplaying game, the likelihood is that you'll face a few puzzles along the way. Well, if you can't solve this one, stick to the twitch shooters.

Across

- A lot of people all playing at once. (12)
- Troubled Dallas developers with two RPGs in the works. (3,5)
- Seattle-based monstrosity publishing the Turbine Software-developed online-only RPG. (16 Down) (9)
- Developed by Cinematix, published by Eidos, featuring hand-animated combat akin to a beat 'em up, this RPG uses the familiar isometric perspective. (8)
- Long time text-based online RPG experts (23 down) are entering the graphical era with an isometric view of their new game world. Twists on the familiar *UO* and *EQ* models include the ability to take a break from developing your character and play a monster. It's due out in Summer 2000. (5,7)
- Play a nano-technology engineered anti-terrorist agent fighting off the bad guys of the year 2052, a time when the world's gone to shit and terrorism rules. Defeating the terrorists is not a task that can be achieved alone — numerous plot devices will be used to send your character to various locations around the world. (4,2)
- If this company develops a game, it sells over a million copies. Simple as that. (8)
- Company that already runs *The Realm* RPG, expanding its involvement with a high-profile license (6)
- Ghostly lon Storm shrouder quietly heading up development of (15 across). (7)
- Table top RPG developer White Wolf has licensed out three of its properties for game development. This blood-sucker looks on course to be one of the stand-out games of the year when it arrives, hopefully by November. (7)
- While owing much to the text-based *MUD*'s and *MUSH*'s of roleplaying lore, this game blazes a trail on the massively multiplayer RPG landscape, suffered all manner of trials and tribulations, and still rakes in over \$1 million a month in subscription fees. (6,6)
- Of all the forthcoming online RPG's, this established game world will garner massive attention, given that the book on which this game world is based was voted *Book of the Century* in 1997, and the long-awaited movie versions are currently in production. (6,5)
- Click Entertainment, formed by ex-Bizzard alumni, are working on *Throne of Darkness*, an isometric RPG set in feudal Japan, where you control a warlord and seven samurai. After defeating the apparent ultimate evil — the Dark Warlord — the game then switches direction, with you becoming the dark one, controlling shadow warriors against all those who oppose his rule. The setting, pace, and graphical splendor are strongly influenced by this 1957 movie directed by the legendary Akira Kurosawa. (6,2,5)
- When creating an action RPG, everyone is likely to be chasing this highly anticipated sequel that introduces four new character classes and a slew of new spells and effects, mixed with the same frighteningly addictive gameplay of the original. It's due out at the end of the year, and we'll be highlighting the beta test with six lucky readers in a feature coming in the months ahead. (6,1)

Down

- Table top roleplaying system that moves away from traditional function of tables, statistics, and numerous dice rolls, relying more heavily on the ability to convey a tale. It forms the basis of all White Wolf's RPG products, including *DreamForge*'s action/adventure *Werewolf*, and (14 Down). (12)
- How large a multiplayer game has to be before it's considered a huge RPG. (5)
- (5 Across) developer has former id guy Tom Hall creating this RPG using a highly modified version of the *Duke* 3 engine. "Sixty" Boots and Siletto Away are on a mission to find a long dead alien race, on a journey that will span three dimensions across the galaxy. Incredible effects have been made to give the scripted camera movements a cinematic feel, with character interaction from a third-person perspective taking in extremely well detailed environments. All eyes will be on this title when it ships (around March 2000), and likely ahead of *Doktorino*. (10)



- Marin County developer, made up from former LucasArts stars, is turning (22 Across) into a hot commodity. They've managed to incorporate the multiplayer element to work in a manner that mimics the style of a table top roleplaying game more accurately than ever before. A GM runs the game for up to 8 players, and he can jump in and control any of those characters, and any NPC's, at any time to ensure that the story keeps on track. This could be the most exciting development in PC RPG's ever — actually recreating the level of interaction and pacing that a table top game offers — *that* has not been captured in any computer version. Fingers crossed that these revolutionary developers get it to work. (10)
- Publisher of (26 Across) who is emerging from the really crap years with some decent looking products, including the fast, furious, and curiously appealing remote control racer, *Re-volt*. They also have a new arcade racer, redubbed *Trike-Style* from Criterion Studios (developer of *Sub Culture*), closing in on completion this fall. This post-apocalyptic future ain't so bad, as bored citizens, unable to work, indulge their fantasies in crazy stunt surfing races. These hover boards are capable of wild twists and turns, with higher points scored over the course for combining speed with difficult stunts. (7)
- The big yellow star that players of any of these games see far too infrequently (3)
- The expansion to the game that is causing chaos in the games industry. While not due out until mid 2000, the promise of significant graphic updates (already the trees look more detailed and realistic), new playable race of Lizardmen, and whole new continent could cause further delays in other products as development slides to a halt with programmers and artists alike succumbing to the mind-numbing addition. (9,3-2)
- Developers of (11 Down) who recently added id stalwart programmer Brian Hook to their team. A new (2 Down) and (2 Across) realtime strategy game, currently named *Sovereign*, is already in the works, with different teams fighting for real estate on planets of varying sizes. That's in addition to the continuing work and updates on (21 Down), that will see new zones added for free, with more items and creatures, above and beyond those slated for the full expansion.
- Internet auction site where hundreds of hours of (11 Down) can pay off in real cash, as characters, accounts, items and platinum pieces are traded for cold, hard green backs. With the going rate heading towards \$1 = 2 pp, any character with a high income can keep selling off their excess platinum, stay online 16 hours a day and still, scarily, pay the rent.
- Another White Wolf table top roleplaying game utilizing the (4 Down) system has been licensed to Hyperbole Studios, the group that created the *X-Files* game among others. No publisher has yet picked up the rights, but Hyperbole is using their VirtualCinema technology to create the effects
- In development for a couple of years already, this (2 Down)(Across) RPG takes a slightly different slant on the topic, turning its back on the traditional AD&D-inspired high fantasy of some games, in favor of creating its own style and flavor. Skill-based character creation removes the rigidity of class boundaries, creating plenty of freedom for unique development. A pyramid system of fellowships is supposed to get characters working together, and create in-game politics between these societies that are likely to lead to large scale conflicts. This system should also aid starting characters in finding their feet. While it certainly sports many differences to *EQ* and *UO*, it's grounded in the same philosophy — but whether some of the differences are good game-play decisions, rather than differences for differences sake, is still open to question. (8,4)
- Company founded by Lord British, Richard Garriott, now focusing its attention on online games, backed by the continuing success of *UO*. (6)
- Delphine Software, most well known for the adventure classic *Podé to Black*, is readying this Diablo-esque RPG for a July release. Playing two characters simultaneously from a choice of four (knight, magician, priest and thief), you fight through eight quests covering 32 dungeons from a third-person/isometric perspective. A random element picks which eight quests you need to complete of the 22 included in the game, ensuring plenty of replayability. A definite action skew, akin to say, *Gomlet 3D*, lets you slay 30 monster types with 22 different weapon varieties as you develop your characters, adding skills as they go.
- Developers of (10 Across) who have added a Hercules and Xena licensed setting to their text-based RPG's.
- Westwood finally gave a home to this Diablo-style RPG that's been in development in various guises for four years. Now, the single player game is taking shape with intriguing gameplay styles involving the manipulation of objects in the environment with the ability to set traps and timed spells. Tables, barrels, and other objects all have physical properties, creating an amazing level of detail. Line-of-sight lighting ensures plenty of scares with well-placed creatures hidden in the shadows. A full multiplayer element could also give *Diablo II* some genuine competition.

No cure. No hope.
Only death.

ABOMINATION

The Nemesis Project

The plague is once again stalking the earth. In six days a superpower has vanished under the heels of the most virulent virus humanity has ever known. As the devastation spread, so did the insanity. A cult blossomed as the body count rose. Calling themselves the Faithful, they preached the demise of mankind and the absolution of the BROOD.

In the bowels of a classified government complex, the eight survivors of Project Nemesis awake to a new world. Genetically augmented volunteers from Delta, SEALS, and Force Recon were engineered to be the ultimate weapons for low intensity conflicts. Now they have to fight a war against a different kind of enemy.

FEATURES:

- * Real-time, team based tactical combat
- * Powerful Multi-player options: LAN and Internet support for one to eight players.
- * Equip your operatives with over 150 different weapons
- * Maximum replay value: Proprietary game generator creates unique missions every time you play



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QUESTION #7

Have a guess: What's going to be the biggest selling RTS of the year?

Answer: _____

Ⓢ C&C2: Tiberian Sun

DEVELOPER → Westwood Studios PUBLISHER → EA
RELEASE DATE → September '99

OPINION → Finally, it's shaping up to be a real game. Evidently burdened by some internal wranglings (lead designer Eric Yeo left to start out on his own), C&C2's path hasn't been smooth. A very familiar look to the interface and control method is reassuring, with the promise of the new voxel graphics (including colored lighting) and new units including spies and snipers, enough to warrant a whole new game, rather than an advanced update.

Ⓢ Age of Wonders

DEVELOPER → Kolbitar Development PUBLISHER → God
RELEASE DATE → September

OPINION → Humans have thrown the world occupied by dwarves, elves and orcs into confusion. Playing one of 12 races (or as one of two characters in the single player campaign), you'll be amassing hordes to embark on a turn-based quest bringing elements of roleplaying character development and adventure in to the mix. Incredibly detailed graphics make this the most likely contender to HoMM's fantasy turn-based strategy crown.

Ⓢ Age of Empires 2

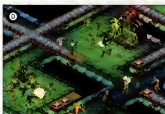
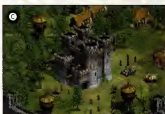
DEVELOPER → Ensemble Studios PUBLISHER → Microsoft
RELEASE DATE → November '99

OPINION → The addition of improved unit AI will certainly help this flawed, but huge selling RTS. The 13 civilizations enter the mix (Franks, Mongols, Vikings, Celtic etc) creating new structures and engaging in diplomatic relations as well as pure combat on route to world domination. Historically based campaigns will feature such characters as Joan of Arc and Genghis Khan.

Ⓢ Abomination

DEVELOPER → Hothouse PUBLISHER → Eidos
RELEASE DATE → September

OPINION → X-COM meets Dido in a futuristic RPG/action/adventure realtime strategy game. Sound confusing? Well, it is and it isn't. The 1.2 million different map variations (from a random map generator) and combination of turn-based elements acted out in realtime means that Abomination might actually be worth checking out. Then again, it could blow and we'd get to use some really cool puns on the title in the review. If these guys have the balls to put a title like this on their game, it better be good.



QUESTION #8

Which of the following is Westwood's first game to bring up close and personal action to the Command and Conquer universe?

Answer: _____

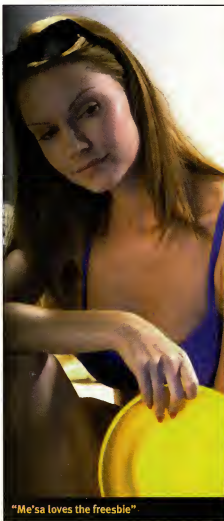
Ⓢ Mutant Tiberium Eaters from Hell

Ⓢ In Kane We Trust

Ⓢ Tanya Forever

Ⓢ Renegade

Ⓢ Sole Survivor



QUESTION #9

What Star Wars character will you finally get to play in the next installment of the Dark Forces first-person shooter (err ... first-person sabre? Blaster?) franchise?

Answer: _____



S O A G Z T Z A P D D L E O Q R H T W H
 L G Z Q Z P O Z F H V A L V E E S N F A
 F O A D K F T M S Y H A N G I M T X C U
 S D A U C J O P C X L I S G O D X B L V
 R L Z V T G U U R L X M T S E G M R A L
 W K P O T F H K F A A R I T T R R X A H
 A H G H B M N R L H I N I G O I O J F A
 K M I I S S Q U A D I G N C X E I T U G N
 D W A R S Y E E H D U G B Y J J S U S O
 E S R L E S D P U D G M W O S F D V D R
 T V E D R D T S L E M O W J W Z E I S E
 N X C N T V G E S N Y P S V A S R Y C P
 U R N A R A I U H F A H E R T W I N G I
 H N G X O F L G N H E A B T W K A X Q N
 T V R K F H F O V S K L V J W I Y X S S
 W Y S E M N H R N T Z F N D L B F F E N I
 Y N H B A Q Z H T S M L K L V K Y I P Q
 Q S X G E L U B L W O I A S W U J N Q Z
 U A P A T J Y O J K C F Y Q R F G H Y L
 X L B P A X R Q T A X E T U K R R U E V

QUESTION #10

Hidden in this jumble are 18 words relating to a bunch of the upcoming squad-based action games. How many can you find?

WORDS →

Hidden, Dangerous, XCOM,
 Alliance, Half Life, Hired Guns,
 Hunted, Rainbow Six, Red Storm,
 Rogue Spear, Sniper, Squad,
 SWAT, Talonsoft, Team Fortress,
 Tom Clancy, Unreal, Valve

QUESTION #11

There are so many games scheduled for release in the Star Trek universe, that it's easy to be confused by what setting they cover. When their prefix names are taken away, how many do you know?

SETTINGS →

1. The Original Series
2. The Next Generation
3. Deep Space Nine
4. Voyager



Elite Force ?



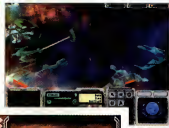
Klingon Academy ?



Starfleet Command ?



The Fallen ?



Armada ?



Insurrection ?



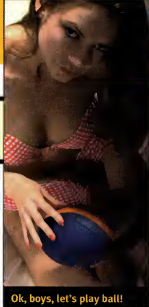
Birth of a Federation ?



New Worlds ?



Clash of the Captains ?



Ok, boys, let's play ball!



ANSWERS

QUESTION #1

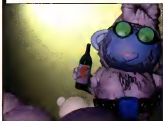
a - 7, b - 8, c - 7, d - 2,
e - 5, f - 3, g - 1, h - 4

QUESTION #2

A. David Bowie, B. Cypress Hill,
C. Devo, D. Mark Snow, E. Yes,
F. KISS

QUESTION #3

If you answered "B" forfeit
all points scored so far.
Answer: A, C and D



QUESTION #4

Sheep

DEVELOPER → Mind's Eye
PUBLISHER → Empire Interactive
RELEASE DATE → December '99
WHAT IS IT → Puzzle game
OPINION → Bizarre, with that
quirky Brit humor and a very scary
interest in the woolly creatures. A
potential sleeper hit.

QUESTION #5

E

QUESTION #7

A - but it's going to be close

QUESTION #8

Renegade

DEVELOPER → Westwood
PUBLISHER → EA
RELEASE DATE → Mid 2000
OPINION → In development now for
some 18 months, Westwood decided
on a third person viewpoint. Using
an "arbitrary mesh" system, this
new engine lets you see many of
C&C's most famous missions from
the grunt's eye view. Many of the
models from the original RTS games
are being used, letting you get inside
a Command Center, and attack SAM
sites using your hand weaponry, and
that of any of the vehicles you'll get
to drive. Still some way from completion, this should be the most involving
and immersive insight in to the
nitty-gritty of C&C combat.

QUESTION #9

Obi-Wan - The name is about all
we know about this game right now.

QUESTION #10

One point for each word found on
these forthcoming games:

Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear

DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → Red Storm
RELEASE DATE → October '99
OPINION → Essentially more of the
same, in the case of R6, that's not a
problem. New detail has been
added to the graphics engine
(though you've got to wonder what

greatness could come from a Quake
III-based squad game) and greater
functionality added to the interface
screens. Responding greatly to user
feedback, the AI has been significantly
overhauled, and the settings
expanded, with the piece de resistance
likely to be a hijacked 747
needing to be cleared.

SWAT 3

See Preview page 66

Team Fortress 2

See Preview page 47



Hidden and Dangerous

DEVELOPER → Illusion Softworks
PUBLISHER → Talonsoft
RELEASE DATE → August '99
OPINION → A realistic WWII setting
is this R6 lookalike's claim to fame.
Covering a period from 1943
through 1945, you'll be commanding
up to four squad mates in six
different regions of Europe. Promising
a realistic, and emotive AI,
Talonsoft aims to blend the strategy
(for which the company is
renowned) and action. It's going to
be on shelves before the rest, and
could well sneak a lead.



Hired Guns

DEVELOPER → VR1
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
RELEASE DATE → Late 1999
OPINION → Using the Unreal
engine, Hired Guns is a cyberpunk
style action/strategy combo where
the four team members must be
manipulated carefully to carry out
the various missions. A complex
interface has, thankfully, been
reworked to be more accessible and
streamlined, and this should help



X-COM Alliance

DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Hasbro
RELEASE DATE → Spring 2000
OPINION → Getting down and dirty
with the aliens, this return to the X-
COM universe uses the always
impressive Unreal engine. Squads
of alien hunters will still have the
familiar tasks of research and devel-
opment that fans of the series
expect, but Alliance will also test
the twitch reactions and communication
as Alien-movie-like settings
are cleared of the threat.

QUESTION #11

a - 4, b - 2, c - 3,
d - none, based near the movie,
e - 1, f - 1, g - 2, h - 2, i - none,
still unannounced, this first-person
shooter is played from four different
angles, as you take the role of one
of the four main captains as they
battle out to finally prove what all
the sci-fi mags and newsgroups
insist on discussing ad nauseum -
which captain was the best.

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force

See details in Question #3

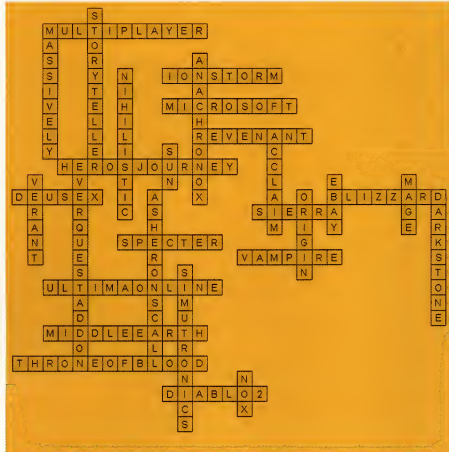
Star Trek: Armada

DEVELOPER → Activision
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Late '99
OPINION → A 3D realtime strategy
in The Next Generation universe,
this space-set game gives the
chance to control the Federation,
Klingons, Romulans or Borg in
resource management, research
and technology advancement.
Through the 26 missions, Patrick
Stewart (Picard and Locutus),
Michael Dorn (Worf), and Denise
Crosby (once Tasha Yar, now Com-
mander Sela) will be providing
voiceovers with advice and mission-
advancing information.

Klingon Academy

See details in Question #1





Star Trek: New Worlds

DEVELOPER → Binary Asylum
PUBLISHER → Interplay
RELEASE DATE → December '99
OPINION → The year 2292 pitches *New Worlds* in the catchment area of The Original Series, but as a realtime strategy game, offers a different slant on what's been seen before in licensed games. Playing as the Federation, Romulans or Klingons, you have to complete missions encompassing many different objectives as you seek to exploit an uncolonized planet. The three races offer a different experience as the Feds must stick within Starfleet's stringent protocol, but the Klingons can go nuts.

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

DEVELOPER → Quicksilver
PUBLISHER → Interplay
RELEASE DATE → October '99
OPINION → Based on the core rules of the *Starfleet Battles* board game, it's a tactical, turn-based strategy game where six

different races (plus a couple of space alien wild cards) battle out for supremacy using all the lasers, phasers and photon torpedoes in their armory. Incredible graphical effects have really stood out in early builds, removing what is an in-depth and involving strategy game from the hardcore-only pigeonhole it could easily fill.

Star Trek: Insurrection

DEVELOPER → Presto Studios
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → October '99
OPINION → The developers behind the expansive *Myst*-allike *Journeyman Project* got the nod to bring this adaptation to the PC. Set nine months after the movie finished, this action/adventure is designed to give you the sense of being a new ensign on the Enterprise. As Ensign Sovok you'll be on your own for much of the journey (don't ask why), getting Picard out of trouble, and enlisting the aid of Data (Stewart) and Brent Spiner reprising their roles). The

26 missions (a throwback to the 26 episodes that exist of The Original Series) will blend action elements such as dodging wild laser blasts, fighting cloaked enemies with solving a range of warp core cooling, universe saving puzzles.

Star Trek DS9: The Fallen

DEVELOPER → The Collective
PUBLISHER → Simon and Schuster Interactive
RELEASE DATE → Fall '99
OPINION → Set between seasons six and seven of the TV show, it begins a millennium saga that will include audio books, novels, and future PC games. Using the *Unreal* engine, the developers hope to avoid the embarrassing disaster that was the first DS9 game (*Harbinger*) with this third-person adventure, in which you take the roles of Sisko, Kira, and Worf. The guys at The Collective aim to intertwine the storylines of the three characters, as each searches for a Red Orb while fighting a new enemy called the Grigari.

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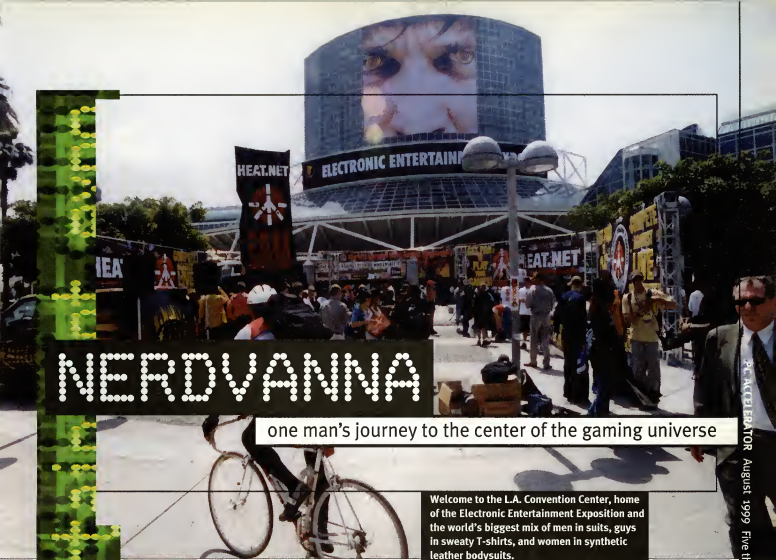
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NERDVANNA

one man's journey to the center of the gaming universe

Welcome to the L.A. Convention Center, home of the Electronic Entertainment Exposition and the world's biggest mix of men in suits, guys in sweaty T-shirts, and women in synthetic leather bodysuits.

Every year, more than 50,000 game developers (the guys who make the games), journalists (the guys who say the games suck), rabid fans (the guys who buy millions of the games, but manage to sneak into this trade-only event by claiming to be from ilikegames.com), and buxom models (the girls who have nothing to do with the previous three during any other time of the year) converge in one city for the videogame conference known as E3. This gathering is, for three days, the focal point of the entire videogame industry, where everyone who is anyone in games gets together to reach the following goals:

- DRINK MASS QUANTITIES OF FREE ALCOHOL
- OCCASIONALLY LOOK AT NEW GAMES

However, for the typical gamer, this mecca of gaming holds about as much interest as Billy Ray Cyrus Tribute Day in Branford, Missouri. The Electronic Entertainment Exposition (heretofore to be called E3 because I'm not so sure I can spell exposition correctly that many times) is created for industry folk, but with a little inside information you too can see what all the fuss is about. All you have to do is follow these simple steps next year, and you're in.

STEP ONE: FINDING A PLACE TO STAY

By the time you read this, it will be almost nine months until the next E3 and too late to get a good hotel. The best hotels near the L.A. convention center are already booked for next year, and your choices are limited to what are known as "periphery hotels." Here are a few of your options:

THE OUT-OF-TOWNER:

If you choose a hotel far from the convention center, your main concern will be the extra cost of transportation. To find out exactly how expensive the ride will be, call the cab company and count the drips of saliva that fall from dispatcher's mouth when he hears that you want a ride to the convention center. If the drool tally reaches higher than eight, purchase a new vehicle when you get there — it will be much cheaper. (Note: When you ask the desk clerks, they will tell you that the hotel is within 20 minutes of the convention center. Repeat after me: THEY ARE LYING.

Nothing in L.A. is 20 minutes from anything else, including stores in the same shopping center. The only exception to this rule are hookers in West Hollywood.]

THE FLEABAG:

This affordable option is easily identifiable by the number at the end of the hotel name such as Motel 6, Super 8, and the ever-popular Hotel California 666. If you are going to stay in these motels remember the following:

- There is no "tuck-in service." So if anyone comes by before bedtime, you will be expected to tip — really well.
- There is no honor bar: But the good news is, those crunchy snacks you found in the middle of the night won't cost you anything.
- Just because your toilet has paper on it, doesn't mean that it is "Sanitized for your safety." Use precaution.

THE BACK SEAT OF YOUR FRIEND'S CAR:

This option was brought to our attention by a very crafty gate-crasher this year. Although he was not able to stand completely erect when we spoke to him, we think he said it was "fine, no really, it was fine."

STEP TWO: GETTING IN

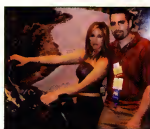
You already know that E3 is meant to be an insider's gig, but don't worry, there are plenty of ways to get around that. Here are a few:

In the fleabag motel there is no "tuck-in service." So if anyone comes in around bedtime, tip well

MAKE YOURSELF A REAL INDUSTRY INSIDER:

Create a gaming website — it's the easiest way to get started. In fact, the most difficult thing about creating a gaming website is finding a name. Get as imaginative as possible. Try something like www.meatypawedgamer.com, www.looneygames.com, www.nonbathinggamer.com, or www.fatguyswholiketo-playquake.com. Unfortunately you will find most of these names already taken by people who wanted to get into E3 this year.

Or if it is too difficult to make a website, all you have to do is print business cards with a fake publication name on it — it works exactly the same. Creating a fictitious means of publicity to impress inexperienced PR types has its advantages. For more information on becoming a fake "media whore," read on ...



Three ways to get into E3:
Hitch a ride with a hottie,
crash in a bus, or follow
the fatty with the gun.



Many people actually spend their E3 time looking at games. However, if you want to meet the guys who actually create the products (or the PCXL staff), your best bet is to find the nearest free bar.

PARTY TIME AN OUTSIDER'S GUIDE

The best part of E3 is clearly the after-hours parties. These soirees are generally insiders only. However if you really want in (to get the free food and beer), there are a few things you can do.

SAY YOU CREATED TAPPER

Game developers are usually long-time gamers ... they love the classics.

SAY "GENEVIEVE OSTERGARD INVITED ME"

You can't go wrong banking on the most beloved name in the industry. (Note: Just don't let Genevieve catch you — she is not fond of stalkers.)

GET YOURSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF A GROUP OF DEVELOPERS

Developers often travel in packs and are often drunk ... Infiltrate the group and you will pass the doorman easily and without question.

LOOK FOR DRUNK JOURNALISTS

By 5:00 PM each day, most of the videogame journalists can be accurately described as "sloppy, sloppy drunk." Say "[Random Publication] is my favorite, I like your writings very much," then ask for extra invites.

BECOME A B-LIST MUSIC BAND

Since most E3 parties involve a top B-list band. This is a good opportunity to get into parties. Just ask Everclear.

MAKE YOURSELF A FAKE INDUSTRY INSIDER:

■ Impersonate an industry professional. Examples: DAVE PERRY → Act tall and British Q*BERT → Act short and orange PCXL STAFFER → Act really, really hung over

■ Create fake game, tell people it is still too early to show and see E3 as a developer (E-mail John Romero at Ion Storm for more information on this tactic.)

■ Buy a used EA Sports jacket. There are thousands of these circulating around. Check your local Goodwill.

■ Have large breasts and a vague resemblance to Lara Croft. Generally just having large breasts will probably get you in, but the Lara angle will make you a shoo-in.

■ Wear leather pants. There are a disturbing number of videogame professionals who wear leather pants. It will help you blend, but please, for the love of decency, show a little restraint in the level of tightness and clingability.

■ Create a new technology that doesn't actually do anything for computer games but has the suffix-izer in it.

■ Become Famous. Besides famous guests at booths, celebrities such as Steven Spielberg, Coolio, and a semi-embalmed Andy Griffith got in for free. If Matlock can make it, so can you.

Once you decide your method for sneaking in, make sure to register on www.e3.com next January. It's really pretty easy.

STEP THREE: WHAT NOT TO DO ONCE GET THERE:

Once you get to E3, deciding what you do is easy, knowing what you shouldn't do is a little more tricky. Perhaps it is best to learn from my bad experiences. I can't really say that my visits to E3 are representative of the average experience, but I can say that I now know what *not* to do:

For instance, the first thing I learned this year was *never* talk to anyone that looks like Thomas Jefferson. This has been a long-standing rule of mine that I forgot for a moment at E3. I also suggest

Perhaps the lesson you should take most to heart is to never call your girlfriend while in an advanced state of inebriation.

not talking to anyone that looks like any of the first 16 presidents, but that's up to you.

In one brief and painful conversation, I spoke with a founding father lookalike without a badge who vigorously defended the game *Nam* and angrily called PCXL the most insulting magazine ever written. After 15 minutes we came to two conclusions: We would agree to disagree about *Nam* and I would agree to classify Mr. Jefferson as nutty as a certified fruitcake rather than "a few levels short of a mission pack."

That night I also learned to *never* use your cabby's name unless you know it for sure:

ME → We've been driving for an hour and the meter says \$60. Are you sure this is the right way
Amid'ahinal?

AMID'AHINAL → Do not make fun of my name, you [unintelligible mumbling with occasional intelligible swear words thrown in] (accelerates cab to approximately warp-

seven while staring back at me).
ME → My mistake. Hey I know! Why don't you drop me off at this unnamed liquor store? Yes, the one where those children are shooting at nuns. It's close enough to my hotel.

Perhaps the hardest lesson (and the one you should take most to heart) was to *never* call your girlfriend while in an advanced state of inebriation. Learn from this actual phone transcript in which the names have been changed to protect the innocent (But we are not making this up):

PCXL STAFFER → Hello Darlin' how's it goin'?
GIRLFRIEND → Dan, are you drunk?

PCXL STAFFER → No, no, I only had eight Coshmoloptins, uh, Coshliopolitins, um, Comshopolitons, er, girl drinks. I think I swallowed an umbrella.

CHUCK IN BACKGROUND → Maybe you should just say goodbye and hang up now

PCXL STAFFER → You're shro beautiful ...

GIRLFRIEND → You're drunk.

PCXL STAFFER → No, no, no no no. No ... what was the question?

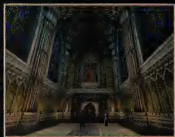
CHUCK IN BACKGROUND → Now might be a good time to hang up. (cont'd p. 34)



Our own Dan won the coveted "Best Portrayal of a Really Important Person at E3" Emmy.



Make sure to stop by the imagine booth at least once when you visit E3. If you get there late enough you will most likely find at PCXL staffer passed out under the desk.



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BEST OF E3 THE "OTHER" STUFF

TEAM FORTRESS II DEVELOPER → Valve PUBLISHER → Sierra

WHY IT MADE US DROOL → This game showed us where teamplay is headed. Using real-time voices, incredible character modeling, and brilliant gameplay design, Team Fortress II rocked our world (however cheesy that sounds, it's true).
SUPPOSED TO HIT STORES → This Christmas.
WHEN WE THINK IT WILL HIT STORES → Nowhere near this Christmas. Look for it spring of next year — at the earliest.



"Yo man, have you seen the Eidos bartender?"

FREELANCER DEVELOPER → Digital Anvil PUBLISHER → Microsoft

WHY IT MADE US DROOL → The graphics in Freelancer are at the level of the pre-rendered sequences in many of today's games. Also the promise of a massive online world makes this game seem almost too good to be true.
SUPPOSED TO HIT STORES → Fall of 2000.
WHEN WE THINK IT WILL HIT STORES → Don't count on it. There is still too much to do on this game.



This isn't Freelancer, but we assume you'll see flying saucers.

MOTORCROSS MADNESS II DEVELOPER → Rainbow Studio PUBLISHER → Microsoft

WHY IT MADE US DROOL → Motorcross Madness II had some of the best outdoor environments we've seen in a racer. Add that to the game's incredible physics and freedom to roam and you've got a winner.
SUPPOSED TO HIT STORES → Fall of 2000.
WHEN WE THINK IT WILL HIT STORES → It should be close to that time.



This is how Robbie Knievel busts into E3.

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO DEVELOPER → Planet Moon PUBLISHER → Interplay

WHY IT MADE US DROOL → Lush graphics, unique gameplay, and the same bizarre humor behind MDK means that Giants is going to be as fun to play as it is beautiful.
SUPPOSED TO HIT STORES → Fall '99.
WHEN WE THINK IT WILL HIT STORES → Most likely Spring 2000.



"I used to be a booth babe in a previous life."

BLACK & WHITE DEVELOPER → Lionhead Studios PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

WHY IT MADE US DROOL → Amazing graphics engine, pooping monkeys, worshipping citizens, and an amazing AI engine combined to be nearly as good as Peter Molyneux said it would be — nearly.
SUPPOSED TO HIT STORES → Fall '99.
WHEN WE THINK IT WILL HIT STORES → Sometime after we're dead — approximately.



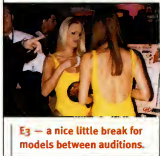
This is pretty much what your head feels like in the morning.

I'm licenced to use this gun and only get paid \$4.50 an hour. Leave me alone or you'll be ROFB



This guy's best shot is the second girl from the left.

GIRLFRIEND → You said you weren't going to get drunk.
PCXL STAFFER → I'm not drunk ... You're sho beautiful, your body ish sho incredible, and your breasts ...
GIRLFRIEND → Hey, isn't Chuck still in the room?
CHUCK IN BACKGROUND → Man, I should have roomed with Bill Trotter, PC Gamer's Desktop General, I bet he isn't having this conversation right now.
PCXL STAFFER → I think I am going to go to the bathroom and barf now, goodbye.
GIRLFRIEND → (I wonder if my ex-boyfriend is out of prison yet.)
Goodnight Dan
PCXL STAFFER → Shh! Don't ushe my real name, this ish supposed to be unanimous, no anonymous, um, the readers aren't supposed to know it's me.



E3 — a nice little break for models between auditions.

The next day I learned to stay away from the loud areas and to never stand too close to the Everquest booth. Nothing quite slaps you in the face with your own geekiness like hearing someone else talk about Everquest in a real life setting. Example:
Random Everquest Player: I am a level 37 Shaman and I just used the Crimson Sword of Purity to defeat a giant Willowisp Conjurer, and a Walking Tree. Will that help me solve the quest where you find the pupil of a floating eyeball, a lizard cleric's tail and Cros Treewind's suspenders? I also had this great experience in Euridin that had me ROFL (Rolling on the Floor Laughing)

[Random Everquest player reaches level 48 in geekiness]
Security Guard [scowling at random Everquest player]: I'm licensed to use this gun, and I only get paid \$4.50 an hour. If you don't leave me alone, you will be ROFB. (Rolling on the floor Bleeding) [Random Everquest Player flees like a cowardly dog, Security Guard wins duel.]

In an effort to find some peace and quiet I learned another lesson: Never get caught in the lonely hall. Every E3 has a convention hall of secondary products. While the big boys party it up in the main halls, smaller companies languish in a convention hall that's slightly less populated than the rural parts of Antarctica. In this area beware of peripherals

that essentially do nothing (and the desperate folks hawking them), booth babes from the Cretaceous Era, and the occasional drifting tumbleweed.

Once I returned to the main halls I learned a simple but important lesson: **Never groove to tech-no music unless you can actually groove** and not appear foolish. Like most hardcore gamers, in 1993 (or whenever *Doom* came out) I forever sacrificed my ability to dance (and my hopes of ever having a rich Corinthian tan) at the altar of *Doom*. But so many booths were blasting bad techno music, I tried to walk with a little groove in my step. That motion was eloquently described by an Eidos booth babe as "something akin to a zombie suffering from Tourette's syndrome."

I will say, however, that the variety of the techno music surprised me, because I always felt that it all sounded the same. But just look at the clever beat at the Activision booth which sounded like Boom chik ba BOOM boom (repeat ad nauseum)...

It's a far cry from music at the GT Interactive booth, which showed how varied techno music can be with its Boom chik ba boom BOOM, chik ba BOOM (repeat ad nauseum)...

Another hard lesson to learn was **never to pick up on booth babes**. These poor, spandex-wrapped souls spent three of the longest days of their lives passing out gaming materials to the pasty masses at E3. One can only imagine the anger generated inside these former prom queens and pageant winners as they are relentlessly pummeled with bad pickup line after bad pickup line. Usually their anger is dishd out to the most pathetic of the pickup artists, but at times absolutely everyone is a target. So if you decide you must talk about a booth babe's bilinear mip-mapping, texture swapping, or RAM capacity, be forewarned.

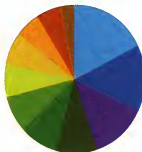
Now that you know how to get to E3, where to stay, and what not to do when you get there, you're pretty much set. It will probably be more fun than you ever imagined, and you may actually remember something cohesive, as long as you learn from my mistakes. But don't look for me. Next year, I'm going as Q*bert.

In this area beware of peripherals that essentially do nothing, booth babes from the Cretaceous Era, and the occasional drifting tumbleweed.

TIME SPENT GAUGE PC ACCELERATOR OFFICES

During E3, the statistical division of PCXL was busy researching the habits of the conference attendees. Many hours were spent studying the lives and average convention gear. While several of our subjects were unfortunately left tagged and drugged we still were able to get the information we needed. Here are our findings...

TIME SPENT BY AVERAGE E3 ATTENDEE



- Trying to shore up party invites
- Playing games
- Standing outside, smoking with the European developers and editors
- Staring at booth babes
- Deciding if your wallet would fit inside the cleavage of a Midway booth babe
- Cursing wasted time when you discover you waited for a Pokemon giveaway
- Standing in line for something you can't see
- Trying to snag free food and drinks
- Spending \$14 for a pretzel
- Standing at the wrong booth waiting to meet someone
- Walking from booth to booth



While we clearly informed our readers that picking up booth babes is both ineffectual and most often dangerous, we felt that it was necessary to try a few lines to see how they worked.

BOOTH BABE LINES

Line: Can I get your Pokemon?

Result: Slap to the face

Line: What's a highly attractive, scantily clad woman like yourself doing in a place like this?

Result: She breaks down in tears

Line: How do you get past the London level in *Tomb Raider III*?

Result: She breaks down in tears

Line: How do you feel about spending the night with geeky editors?

Result: Much laughter, then a slap

e FRUTAX



Remember, if you get the wind knocked out of you,
stay down so I can examine the color of your face.



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For more information, check out our website at www.3dfx.com. **So powerful, it's kind of ridiculous.**

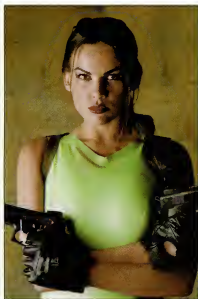
Go to <http://www.pcxl.ign.com/gaming411>. Product Number 10

The new Lara is... uhh... Lara

She drinks Becks, smokes Marlboro Lights, and is charming company. But what else can we learn about the new Lara Croft?

Other "famous" Lara's → Lara Flynn Boyle, Lara Fabian (French singer) PC ACCELERATOR August 1999 <http://www.gol.com>

Lara Weller is the new "official" Lara Croft. Neil West met the 24 year old, 5' 8", 34B-24-34 model for drinks in London (the lucky bastard) to talk about a couple of points.



Umm ... nice guns.

PREVIOUS LARAS



SO HOW DID YOU GET THE JOB?

I've been a swimsuit and lingerie model for a couple of years, and I happened to be in England when the casting for the new Lara Croft model was going on. I look like her, I have the dark hair, and my name's Lara, so I think it was fate.

WERE YOU UP AGAINST A LOT OF COMPETITION? WERE THERE ANY CAT FIGHTS?

No fights. There were a lot of girls there, but I'm sure as soon as they saw me, they thought "There's Lara Croft."

WHAT DID THEY MAKE YOU DO?

Obviously I had to dress up in the clothes, and then I gave them a bit of gun action and ran through all the poses for which Lara is famous. The appeal of Lara is that she's strong and sexy at the same time, so I had to show that in the camera. She's not a tomboy, but she's tough, so that's a balance I have to strike.

SO ARE YOU LIKE LARA IN REAL LIFE?

She's tough, and I can be tough too, especially when something doesn't go my way. And I love adventure. I did a bunjee jump recently, and that was amazing. I had no fear, so next I'm planning a parachute jump.

WHAT ABOUT PHYSICAL SIMILARITY? YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE THE HAIR AND THE HEIGHT, BUT LARA'S RENOWNED FOR BEING ...

HOW CAN WE PUT THIS ... WELL, ABSOLUTELY STACKED.

Ha! Why do men always have to ask about breasts? But it's true, Lara is a double D or whatever and I'm 34B. You can tell she's been invented by men, because no woman has natural breasts that size. I'm happy with mine! If they were as big as Lara's it would be painful — jumping, swimming, climbing ... ouch!

WE'RE HAPPY WITH YOURS, TOO. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BECOMING THE PRIMARY SEX OBJECT FOR VIDEOGAME FANS THE WORLD OVER?

Fantastic! I like it. Does that sound really tacky?

NO, NO. NOT AT ALL. DO YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND?

Yes ... I do. And he's very happy with the idea of me being the new Lara Croft.

NO SHIT.

He loves playing videogames — what guy doesn't — and that's when I first saw Lara. He's got a PlayStation and he's a big *Tomb Raider* fan. He always said that I could have been Lara Croft.

DID HE EVER GET YOU TO DRESS UP AS LARA, BEFORE YOU GOT THIS JOB?

No, but he likes the costume now. I'm not sure if I like it so much. It's very tight and sweaty, so it wouldn't be too sensible for a night out. When I'm at the shows I have to change several times a day.

SO DO YOU LIKE TO SWEAT? [laughs] I'd rather be hot than cool, I think ...

SO, AFTER A FULL DAY OF BEING LARA, HOW DO YOU CHILL OUT?

I love yoga. I'm going to try and get Core to put some yoga moves into the new version of *Tomb Raider*.

THAT SOUNDS VERY RELAXING. WOULD YOU SAY YOU WERE A LAID-BACK PERSON?

Oh yes, I don't get stressed out very much. And I'll talk to anyone. If people recognize me on the street then I want them to come up and say "hi."

REALLY? SO WHAT ELSE COULD A GUY DO TO WIN SOME OF YOUR TIME?

I like funny, relaxed guys who are friendly and natural. Sense of humor is very important. Oh, and coconut ice cream, of course! Bring me some coconut ice cream and you'll be in my good books.



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3D Geek News

News you can trust (basically) about all the geeky nonsense that makes your games faster, brighter, more curvy, and more colored

CREATIVE LEGAL WRANGLING

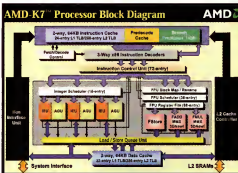
Following a history of copyright lawsuits in the 3D card technology markets, 3Dfx recently filed suit against Creative. In it, they claim that the sound and video card manufacturer used copyright 3Dfx Glide code in their new Unified driver bundle, which is designed to allow Creative TNT and TNT2 owners to play "Glide-only" games on their cards. Under the terms of 3Dfx's licensing agreement, use of their Glide code is not permitted in software for non-3Dfx technology.

At press time there had only been a limited response from Creative, with their spokesmen suggesting that the claims were groundless and the action would be fought. Their Unified drivers seemed like something of a god-send for TNT2 owners frustrated by the Glide-only requirements of a dwindling number of games. While Creative suggests that they will continue to support the driver set, it is unlikely that they will be available to download by the time you read this.

MOVE OVER PENTIUM. HERE COMES ATHLON

On June 24th, AMD announced that they were shipping the K7 processors to OEM partners for use in systems to ship later in the year. Officially named the Athlon, the AMD-K7 marks the first time the company can see daylight ahead of the next Intel release (codenamed Willamette) due some time later next year. The first processors to ship will run at 600, 550 and 500MHz and, crucially, will run on new motherboards with a 200MHz clock speed (double the current standard in the high-end gaming machines).

Using a Slot A connector, the Athlon won't run on existing Slot 1 motherboards. Though the connection is almost identical, the electrical interface runs dif-



ferently. The evolution of the chip architecture to what AMD claims is the first real seventh generation of processor power means a whole bunch of forward thinking and little backwards compatibility. Currently Pentium III and even AMD K6-2 motherboards won't support the new chipset. AMD will continue to support 3D Now! in the K7's, and with some improvements making it easier for developers to program to this technology, it could become a more prominent feature in some of the next generation of games.

We'll have full reviews and benchmarks of K7-based systems in a couple of issues.

QUICK HITS

CUT PRICE TNT2

Guillemot is securing the cheap end of the 3D video card market, but with high-end quality products. They recently dipped the price of the 16MB Med Xenter TNT2 to a ridiculously affordable \$109.99 (after a \$20 company mail-in rebate from an in-store price of \$129.99). Coming resplendent with an OEM version of Interplay's gob-smacking *Kingpin* and the full version of Ubi Soft's decent *Street Busters*, this is definitely one of the best bangs for the bucks.

CONCERNED PARENTS

Former *PC Games* readers may be interested in the NetSafetyPC. For just \$400 you can buy a web-TV (roughly a P300 with 32MB RAM, 2GB hard drive, V.90 modem, and 15-inch monitor) with built-in NetSafety software that prevents all the badness on the Internet turning your darling offspring into porn fiends. The plan to "protect children from online predators" means that even spam e-mail is filtered out, but more importantly, it's linked to a police computer for parents to warn law enforcement agencies if any online predator approaches their kids. Scary stuff, huh?

A happy, peaceful, friendly community is building around the NetSafety system, utilizing Yahoo!igans and Searchopolis' search engines that only find the good, wholesome, family-oriented content on the Internet.

As fellow concerned utility citizens, we figured you'd be interested in this. Now go surf for porn!

CYBERTRONICS VRPRO 9500

Faster, Pussycat ... Tilt! Tilt!

PRICE → \$69.95

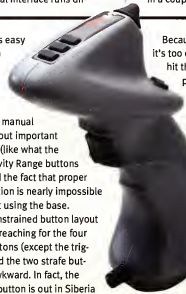
BUNDLE → Full version of *Viper Racing* or a *Star Wars* game bundle

It seemed like you couldn't walk 10 feet at E3 without tripping over a new tilt-sensor joystick. One we tripped over was the VRPro from start-up Cybertronics. Unlike most we saw, it's a one-handed, all-in-one unit (hat, throttle, and all buttons are on the stick) which can be used by either right or left-handed gamers. It also ships with a slip-on base in case your arm tires (or your tire of looking ridiculous).

Resembling a *Star Trek* phaser, the VRPro is light, aside from the removable weighted base. Instal-

lation is easy enough (and driver-free), but the skimpy manual leaves out important details (like what the Sensitivity Range buttons do) and the fact that proper calibration is nearly impossible without using the base.

A constrained button layout makes reaching for the four fire buttons (except the trigger) and the two strafe buttons awkward. In fact, the fourth button is out in Siberia on the nose, non-intuitively requiring your free hand to press it.



Because of limited space, it's too easy to accidentally hit the wrong button in a panic attack. With practice, you can approach (but never quite reach) the control of a good joystick.

In this case, one-handed control doesn't give any advantage — it's still too easy to over-tilt, doesn't feel natural, and looks hilarious to giggling spectators. The VRPro is aimed at all the markets, but, novelty factor aside, much better (and

cheaper) peripherals exist for all three. Save your bucks and pass on this one.

RATING 5



A GOOFY A-ARMED TWIST SCOOBY DOO EQUIVALENT → Scooby Dum

+ Pluses

- Ambidextrous
- Converts to standard stick with a base
- No drivers needed

- Minuses

- Poor button placement
- Quirky calibration
- Diminished control

Matrox

Millennium G400 Max

PRICE → \$249
WEBSITE → www.matrox.com
BUNDLE → Picture Publisher 8, Simply 3D 3, PointCast, Matrox DVD, Expendable

As a long-time cynic when it comes to Matrox products (a result of a terrible experience with their dreadful first 3D experiment, the Mystique), the G400 showed that Matrox could live up to some of its own hype. With the G400 their reputation is back intact with a card that delivers excellent performance and visibly better image quality than even the TNT2's can

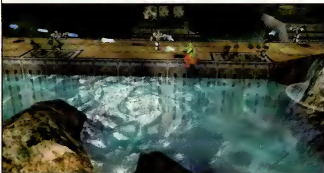
muster. Not only that, but with on-board features such as the Dual-Head Display, allowing you to use the one card to power two monitors, it's got the flash to go with the solid performance.

The 32MB card (running at 360MHz RAMDAC, as opposed to the non-Max 32MB variant running at 300MHz and \$50 cheaper) supports AGP 2x and 4x and really shone in the Direct3D tests we conducted using FutureMarks' 3D Marks, outstripping the TNT2's in Fill Rates and Texture Rendering scores (see bench-

marks). As has been the case with Matrox cards, the performance with office favorite *Quake II* was disappointing, but as the card took advantage of *Quake III*'s 32-bit textures, it produced some of the most dazzling effects we've seen. Frame rates seemed slightly lower than the TNT2 cards we tested (though not to the detriment of gameplay), but the visuals were incredibly crisp, bright and dazzling.

On the bundled *Expendable* (Rage's eye-candified graphic showcase sequel to *Incoming*), the G400 really took advantage of the environment bump-mapping (the closest effect to creating realistic water ripples) and this feature is being incorporated in a number of hot-looking new games coming this fall (including *Slave Zero*).

If you want a TV tuner with your card, you'll have to turn to a TNT2 option, but the DualHead Display is a useful feature for high-end show-off types.



Matrox Millennium G400 DualHead
 CANN002-DL (A, 11.01.1118)
 14bit colour, (854x625)
 3DMark Quality Test 7



Resolutions in the 3D Mark are far clearer than Voodoo 3.

BENCHMARKS

QUAKE II → 51.5 (800x600)
 49.4 (1024x768)
 3DMARK → 2961

RATING

+ Pluses

→ Visibly higher quality images than Voodoo 3 and TNT 2

Minuses

→ No TV tuner and sluggish OpenGL performance

Diamond

Viper V770 32MB TNT2 Ultra

PRICE → \$249
WEBSITE → www.diamondmm.com
BUNDLE → Wild Metal Country, Superbike World Championships (full versions), Need for Speed III OEM demo

Diamond has enjoyed deserved market mindshare dominance among gamers ever since the launch of the Monster 3D (and even with the Stealth range before 3D was even invented). They're aiming to cement that position with the "Tweaked for Gamers" tagline on their high-end 32MB TNT2 Ultra card. Backed by their reputation for solid driver support (InControl Tools 99 lets you control all the usual Diamond display properties with ease), Diamond seemed a little slow out of the gate with the final TNT2's, likely finalizing the drivers that have caused early teething problems for Nvidia's hot new chipset.

Supporting up to AGP 4x (should your motherboard support

it) the 32MB on-board memory gives plenty of power to the Direct3D games, but as with all the TNT2's, lags behind the Voodoo 3 in OpenGL performance.

The Ultra RAMDAC runs at 300MHz, the same level as the G400 32MB, but lower than the G400 Max, at which \$249 price point this card matches. A possible boon here is the ability to over-

clock the standard 150MHz speed to 175 or 200MHz with a simple slider in the InControl software. This certainly pushes a few more frames, though the long-term dangers of damage to cards due to the increased heat caused by over-clocking is not well documented.

There's no doubt that Diamond produces solid products. Installation of the card was a breeze,

which is fortunate given the limited printed help material. High level support for mammoth resolutions (up to 2048x1536) is all well and good, but entirely useless for most users on a practical level. But be assured that there's no worry over the V770's power. By our count this is the best TNT2 on the market.



Quake III ... ah, yes ... Quake III in 32-bit splendor

BENCHMARKS

QUAKE II → 65.3 (800x600)
 46.9 (1024x768)
 3DMARK → 2880

RATING

+ Pluses

→ Excellent driver support, plenty of gamer features

Minuses

→ Same price as G400 Max, which scored better results

DEMONSTRATION #2:

- 1 Tear out your old sound card.
- 2 Smash into pieces.
- 3 Toss over your shoulder.

► The sound those pieces make when they hit the ground all *around* you is the power of A3D from Aureal, the only audio that works the way your ears do.

That's why leading sound card vendors, such as Diamond, TerraTec, Turtle Beach, and Xitel, are using Vortex audio technology from Aureal, the only 3D audio accelerator that supports industry leading A3D positional audio technology.

You can also find A3D positional audio on computer models from the industry's leading PC manufacturers.

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Go to <http://pcxlign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 20

Creative 3D

Blaster

32MB TNT2 Ultra

PRICE → \$229

WEBSITE → www.soundblaster.com

BUNDLE → 3Dexp, Colorific (no games)

Creative continues to play the game alongside Diamond as one of the biggest card manufacturers, but its entry at the top of the TNT2 tree was something of a



Expendable uses the Blaster's control to make games brighter.

mixed bag. On the surface, the 32MB 300MHz DAC speed is all but identical to the Diamond card. For feature sets, the Diamond scores with its support for 4x AGP bus speeds (Creative manages just 2x), but the Blaster can respond with a TV connector to let you plug in your PC to the big-screen TV for some low-res, big size action.

For gamers, the Blaster does little to make it an attractive option. There aren't even any game demos in the CD bundle, which is an oversight in a market where the first customers are likely to be those desperate to play the *Quake III Arena* test in its glorious 32-bit texture color. Although we didn't have the opportunity to use the Creative

Unified driver set (currently in legal hot water with 3Dfx) designed to allow TNT2 users to play Glide-only games, the OpenGL performance in the *Quake II* tests was excellent, posting impressive numbers at different resolutions. Should Creative win its legal case, and the Unified drivers remain in circulation, this could be a major boon for gamers.

At \$30 list price cheaper than the Viper, the Blaster tries to make headway. But while the specs and performance are similar, and even the Blaster Control software performs many functions (including an overlocking RAM speed slider), Diamond's focus on the gamer gives them an edge that should add up to better

frame rates for many of this fall's games. The Guillemot Xentor is cheaper and the Diamond Viper 770 performs better, leaving the 3D Blaster stuck in the middle. ▶

BENCHMARKS

QUAKE II → 67.5 (800x600)

59.5 (1024x768)

3D MARK → 2859

RATING

➕ Pluses

→ Somewhat cheaper than the Viper; can play on TV

➖ Minuses

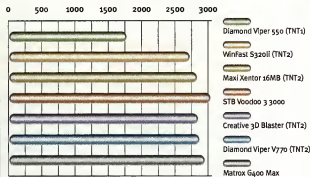
→ No games; slightly lower benchmark scores

The Final Analysis

Including last month's look at the Voodoo 3, WinFast S3201 TNT2, and Maxi Xentor 16MB TNT2, we've now assessed six of this new generation of video cards with 3Dmarks and *Quake II* tests on the same system (a PII 400 Celeron, 128MB RAM, running DirectX 6.1 and Win98 on an Intel BX440 chipset mother-board). Here's an overall rundown of the cards:

THE 3DMARKS™

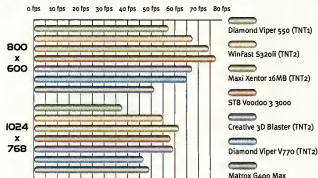
FutureMark's 3Dmarks tests the DirectX-based power of video accelerators over a variety of functions. They include frame rate performance on a racing game test, first-person shooter test, fill rates, and texture rendering performance at levels up to 32MB. The overall score represents how the card performed in all tasks, although the breakdown in individual categories showed some significant changes between the cards (most notably the G400's significant outscoring of the TNT2's in texture rendering).



OPENGL (OR SIMPLY, QUAKE II)

No card is considered tested unless it's been run through the *Quake II* time demo 1/demopam demos.dm2 test. We logged the scores for all these cards at both 800x600 and 1024x768 resolution (all scores are in the usual frames per second).

QUAKE II TIME DEMO I



Y'know, all these boards exhibit such similar scores in our tests that our recommendations come down to personal preferences. The Diamond board certainly has the gamer's interests at heart with its bundle and focus, while the G400 Max blitzed through some of the tests and with its environment bump-mapping support, will make some of the forthcoming games look better than on the TNT2's.

The card control software can also make a big difference to your choice, and again, there's no doubting Diamond's InControl Tools quality. Here the G400 Max is found a little wanting. Future driver support will also make a difference, and should Creative remain loyal to Unified drivers, these babies could end up pushing the Blaster beyond the Viper by a few frames per second. Another issue is TV support. The

Blaster had support already, but it's likely that both Matrox and Diamond will include it in future iterations of these cards.

Shop around for the best deals (the Maxi Xentor being the best bargain buy at press time). Most of all, with such a close range of choices, rest assured that whatever you pick, it's not going to be too far from being the best of this generation. ▶

*"Political power grows out
of the barrel of a gun."*

-Mao Tse-tung

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FORCE 21

2015: WWII

choose sides

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as much as a good fight."*

-Franklin Delano Roosevelt



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3-D
TACTICAL
WARGAME
as
intense
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and war itself.



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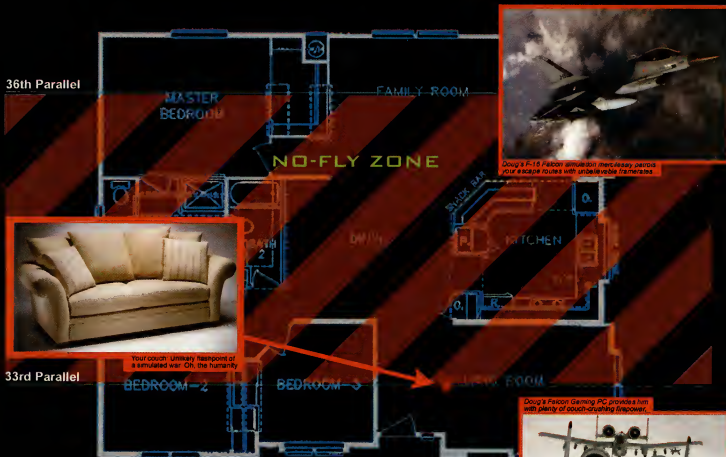
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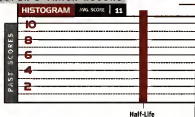
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Team Fortress 2

It'll make *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* its bitches

As a six year industry veteran (and counting), it is a rare moment when a game is so impressive that I'm left with that giddy feeling of excitement normally reserved for first dates, Vikings games, and that first beer on a Friday afternoon. (I really mean Friday evening, in



case my boss is reading). After seeing the *TF2* demo at E3, the only words I could get out were "damn" and "wow."

So what was so amazing about *TF2*? The *Quake II* engine graphics were even better than those in *Half-Life*, but nothing revolutionary. The premise of team-based gameplay, focusing on different character classes working as a cohesive unit has already been pretty much perfected in *Team Fortress Classic*. The voice technology, whereby characters onscreen actually lip sync the words you say into the microphone, could bring a new dimension to teamplay games, but that wasn't it either. What blew me away about *TF2* was a combination of all the above, and some of the best missions I've ever seen.

TF2 will have a total of 20 missions, each with its own unique gameplay plant. They fall into various categories like Escort and Ter-

ritorial Control, but require some slightly different tactical maneuvers and awareness. The first mission we witnessed had one squad board an amphibious vehicle, while the other squad is stationed on a sandy beach. The vehicle docks, and all hell breaks loose (think first 30 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*). But that's not all — many of the missions are grouped into campaigns of two or more connected maps, wherein the success on earlier maps affects the following maps. For example, the number of invaders who make it past the beach invasion adds to the number of lives the invading team has in the second phase, where they are trying to blow up enemy installations.

Another mission has one team parachuting down, while the others are on the ground, firing at the falling invaders. The number of parachuters that successfully land — alive — adds to the

▶ p. 50

FIVE QUESTIONS

DOUG LOMBARDI (FORMERLY KNOWN AS "DRUNK SIERRA SOURCE") TACKLES THE SUBJECTS THAT REALLY MATTER — COFFEE, BOOTH BABES, AND OF COURSE, SACRIFICIAL GOATS.

Q: Starbuck's or Seattle's Best?

A: Starbuck's. We have to say this, as Chuck Jones [Valve 3D artist] regularly dates the women who work at the Starbuck's below our offices.

Q: Will the game really make it out by Christmas, or is that what you're saying to keep us press types from ragging on you?

A: A goat died to give us our "later this year" date, and you are going to question its sacrifice? For shame.

Q: Being the hottest development house in the PC industry must mean endless headbutting offers from the competition. How is Valve managing to hold onto its talent?

A: Most of the people at Valve could start up their own development groups if they wanted to. So long as they feel that being at Valve makes them better (because of the people around them), and that they are participating in the success of the products and of the company, then they will probably stay. We're up-front about people having choices, and making sure that Valve is the best.

Q: Describe your emotions when you found out *Half-Life* won the prestigious PCXL Game of the Year award? It's okay if you cried.

A: I cried, but not as much as when the goat got it.

Q: Who gets more "action" — game developers, journalists, or marketing scum (not the wonderful people at Sierra — we mean those other companies' marketing scum)?

A: Since my fiancée is a subscriber to PCXL, I must say that I spent very little time worrying about that sort of business. (Ed note: Like the rest of us, he didn't score either)

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Valve Software
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → December (not likely)
3D SUPPORT → OpenGL, DirectX9

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

TF2 is far and away the best looking game **PCXL** has seen this year. The levels, the characters, and effects — everything looks perfect.

THE HURDLE

Originally scheduled to be an add-on pack for *Half-Life*, can *TF2* make it as a stand-alone product?

THE HIT

Valve hasn't done a thing wrong yet, and the wise free release of *Team Fortress Classic* ensures the game's success — when it finally comes out.



Weapon encampments and strongholds are a crucial part of the *Team Fortress 2* experience — if you don't take them out, then you will pay dearly for it later.



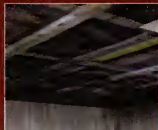
Tf2 Gallery

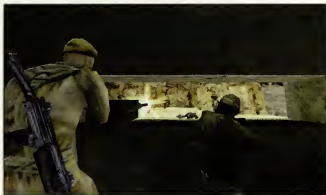
Teamwork is a big part of *Tf2*. Helping a teammate by feeding ammo to a gun, blowing a bridge to cut off a precious supply line, or even jumping on a grenade to save the entire squad can all be done in the name of teamwork.





Facial mapping and skinning on the characters in *TF2* makes for some spectacular graphics. The difference in appearance also promotes a visual clue for everyone to see — a clue that is used particularly well as the spy character. Set him to look like the Hunted, and you can throw snipers off course.





Armored gun stations make for gruesome battles, as you mow down everyone in sight — just watch out for a fire in the hole.

► **P-47** numbers who go on the next step of the campaign. This type of variety in game styles and collection of amazing gameplay scenes is what is going to make *TF2* such a great game. Oh but wait — there's more ...

One of the many complaints and concerns about *TF2* is that it will be online only, but word out of Valve and Sierra confirms that this is not true. Doug Lombardi, the game's producer, let us in on a few of the bot elements, saying, "TF2 will contain bots designed to seamlessly fill in for players. They're able to play any position and class in the team, from a Medic in a squad to the Comman-

der above the field. You could play alone, with an entire team of bots fighting an enemy team of bots. Or, you could play as a Commander, with a team of bots, versus a friend commanding another team of bots, which would be similar to an RTS. You could even get 10 of your friends and take on an enemy team of bots."

So not only is *TF2* the best squad-based multiplayer game on the horizon, but it's an RTS as well. Damn! I should also mention that the game features a number of vehicles, which can be controlled, called in, boarded, or otherwise used in combat. The vehicles include helicopters, airplanes, armored vehicles, amphibious vehicles, tanks, and several others that have yet to be announced.



Strategic locations like bridges, command centers, and strip clubs are often targeted first. You can even take out the bridge!

Add in gun emplacements, sandbags, and some of the most inspired level design anywhere and you have got a battlefield just begging to witness epic battles.

The character classes are very similar to those in *TFC* and feature units like a sniper, spy, medic, demoman, pyro, soldier, heavy weapons, scout, and of course, the hunted (or as we call him, Mr. President). Valve is working on more balancing, some new weapons, and generally making the game pretty damn perfect.

This type of detail in design is both the good news and the bad news. The good news is that *TF2* is going to kick large amounts of ass. The bad news is that *TF2* won't likely make it out until late in the year 2000 (despite their claims of Christmas '99 — bah humbug!). But from what I've seen, it'll still be well worth the wait.

— **MIKE SALMON** *hasn't been this excited about any game since the original Resident Evil for the PlayStation*

CLASSIC BATTLES

The setting up of classic scenes like D-Day in *TF2* got us thinking about some other not-so-classic battles that should be recreated for an add-on pack.



HUNTER / ASSASSIN WITH JERRY AS THE HUNTER

ANY "JERRY SPRINGER" EPISODE

ATTACKING TEAM → Your wife's left you for a hermaphrodite lover and waited to tell you about it on national TV. Grab chairs and attack.
DEFENDING TEAM → Cover behind freakish hermaphrodite lovers and hope Jerry has to go to commercial before brain-dead husband gets to you

THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN KOSOVO

ATTACKING TEAM → Target strategic military installations in Kosovo. Now fire bomb at Chinese Embassy and say "oops"
DEFENDING TEAM → "Accidentally" raise prices on all U.S. imports

INVASION OF FRANCE

ATTACKING TEAM → Gather your troops (you don't need many) and march onto French soil. Now wait for surrender
DEFENDING TEAM → Surrender



The Spy is easily one of the coolest classes in the game and is able to disguise and assassinate.

ALSO AVAILABLE FOR PSX FROM ROCKSTAR GAMES

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT OF THE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL GRAND THEFT AUTO IS NOW ON SALE. SHOPLIFTERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.

"A deep, addictive, naughty game play experience."

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- PC Format

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- GamesMansion.com

This is the original, uncut, full version of Grand Theft Auto, fully tricked out with the all-new GTA London: 1969 Mission Pack. It's more fast cars, more dangerous streets, and more cops to outrun and outwit than ever before. Now you can tear through three of America's toughest cities, plus the mean streets of London, leaving a trail of mowed-down mercenaries, hired killers, and rival gang members in your outlaw wake. All of the wild car chase action of the original is here, times two. Please, while it may be tempting, just don't steal this game.

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DIRECTOR'S CUT



PREVIOUSLY ON STARLANCER

As we reported back in February, Digital Anvil was started by industry veteran and *Wing Commander* creator Chris "Sorry About That Movie" Roberts. DA, which also includes Erin Roberts and Robert Rodriguez, continues its relationship with "The Big M" with *Starlancer*, and another space sim to be released next year, *Freelancer*.

Starlancer

Baby, You're a Starlancer ...

Though there's been slim pickings in the realtime strategy and adventure game genres, space sim aficionados have been treated to a handful of stellar titles from which to choose over the past year, led by Interplay's *Descent: Freespace* and Infogrames' *Independence War*. Despite this "cavalcade" of options, joystick jockeys have been wondering

what's to come from Chris and Erin Roberts. These brothers are two of the more respected game designers in this genre due to their *Wing Commander* and *Privateer* series, respectively (not Chris' movie — which was bad enough to warrant a bashing at every opportunity — see boxout next page).

While Chris' epic *Freelancer* project is still a good 12 to 18 months away from lift-off, Erin and his development teams at Digital Anvil and Warthog PLC are close to finishing *Starlancer*, to be published by Microsoft by year-end. In anticipation of the bigger, bolder *Free-*

lancer project, *Starlancer* is shaping to be the real deal for '99.

Starlancer takes place roughly 200 years in the future, where the major Earth powers (U.S., Russia, Germany, China, UK, etc.) are all competing tooth-and-nail to colonize planets for expanded territory and resources. As a young pilot, you join the newly-formed 45th Volunteers Squadron, a civilian aviation unit created to aid in the heated war. Depending on what nation you choose to fight under, the mission structure and story branching will vary. In total, there are 31 scenarios in the single

player game, but with many optional side-branching missions adding to the potential longevity.

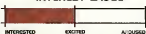
In both story and gameplay, *Starlancer*'s level of detail is ambitious. Over 6,000 lines of dialogue are incorporated, as pilots chat to you and each other, as well as for motion-captured CGI cut-scenes. Most importantly, a vital element in this alien-infested genre is the



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Digital Anvil
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
RELEASE DATE → Winter 1999
API SUPPORT → DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

A good looking, deep space sim with dynamic missions and a multiplayer co-op mode. And, it's a Roberts game to boot.

THE HURDLE

There will be some stiff competition in the space sim market this year, including one based on the popular *Babylon 5* license.

THE HIT

Given the talent behind this project, coupled with Microsoft's influence, *Starlancer* could be one of the '99 holiday highlights.



A 3D card won't be necessary, but it will obviously look better.

FIVE QUESTIONS

PCKL CHATTED WITH THE ALWAYS-EXCITABLE ERIN ROBERTS, PRODUCER ON STARLANCER, AND FOR ONCE, WE ACTUALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT HE WAS SAYING.

Q: How many people are currently working on *Starlancer*, and since when?

A: We have 10 at Digital Anvil and 18 at Warthog in the UK. We began working on the game itself in early 1998.

Q: What are you able to do now — technologically — that you weren't able to pull off before?

A: The level of effects in the game are quite pleasing. The poly count on some ships is the first thing that comes to mind ... there are some 5,000 or 6,000 polys on some of the bigger ships.

Q: As *Starlancer* is a new game, is it more personal to you than creating a sequel?

A: Indeed. It was fun to build a whole new story ... *Privateer* and *Wing Commander* were Chris', of course.

Q: What's left to do on the game still?

A: Continue to add the missions in and improve the AI.

Q: What did you think of *Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace*?

A: It was a fun movie but I thought George Lucas took ... uh ... liberties ... with the storyline.



The visuals in *Starlancer* look to be nothing short of incredible, with gorgeous jumpgate sequences, particle explosions, and colorful nebulae, just to name a few effects. With Microsoft backing up this product, *Starlancer* is set for greatness.

STARLANCER: THE MOVIE

No offense to Chris Roberts, but *Wing Commander* (the film) absolutely blew chunks. What we fear more than anything is that Chris will make more movies. Below is a scene we'd expect to see in *Starlancer: The Movie*.

(Fade in to ship's main deck)

CAPTAIN SOMETHING OR OTHER → Smith, we've lost contact with those cheesy-looking puppet aliens we're supposed to be afraid of. If we don't find them, I fear this whole movie will be one giant cliché.

SMITH → I'll find them sir...

MISS HARD-ASS, who is later revealed as the token love interest (played by semi-butch looking actress with no acting skills) → ... shut up Smith. I've forgotten more cliché dialogue than you'll ever learn. Let's go.

TOKEN MINORITY (Played by unknown minority actress who actually seems really, really white) → I'll lead the unit in, even though I'm quite aware that minority actors/actresses have very little chance of surviving in any sci-fi movie. Oh, by the way, I love you, Captain. (Much sobbing ensues, camera follows Token Minority to unknown CGI planet)

TOKEN MINORITY → Aaaaah, splat — crash, blam. **CAPTAIN** → Damn, now there's no chance of nudity.

MISS HARD-ASS → Don't worry Captain, I'm about to show my soft underbelly as I jump naked onto those freaky looking puppets. If you get the DVD version, my right nipple will be fully visible when paused.

CAPTAIN → Nooooooo!

SMITH → Captain, I did catch some nip there and besides, she's distracted their tractor beams and now we've won.

CAPTAIN → Let's have a celebration and roll the damn credits

(By the way, in the upcoming game, *Freelancer*, a "big mystery" will be answered, stemming back to *Starlancer* ... what happened to the Sol system for it to go Super Nova?)

human factor; that is, there are no aliens this time around (nary a Kilrathi in sight), and so the relationships draw strong analogies to mid-20th century warfare and the allied relationships therein.

There are over 80 different kinds of craft in *Starlancer* (13 of which are available for you to pilot), plus there's a hearty collection of weapons at your disposal. Amid all the dog-fighting, the Sol system will be paved with varied obstacles and eye candy, such as asteroid fields, space stations, planets, cargo depots, and portals. One of the objectives in *Starlancer* is to create a sense of a living and breathing galaxy going about its business, regardless of your input. Therefore, it will not be uncommon to observe ships collecting resources off a planet, a battle taking place a few thousand light years away, or ships docking on space stations.

Lastly, there are two multiplayer modes currently planned, though more may be added. Both are playable over LAN or Internet,

via Microsoft's MSN Gaming Zone (for free). The first is a Death-match game, with exclusive maps and lots of places to hide. But it's the co-op mode that sounds particularly interesting — two to four players (depending on the speed of the modem) will be able to fly the entire solo-player game of *Starlancer* side-by-side.

If all the intriguing concepts make it into the final game (and believe it or not, at 80% completion, it seems as if this game is certainly on track) *Starlancer* should easily match or even exceed all the pre-release hype it has already garnered.

— **MARC SALTZMAN** believes he was the only one who bought Microsoft's ill-fated Space Simulator five years ago. Make him an offer on eBay



CAPTAIN SOMETHING OR OTHER



MISS HARD-ASS



CAPTAIN



Players will have over a dozen ships, each with its own attributes.



At the heart of *Starlancer* is the modified "Surrender" engine, used in *Privateer 2* and tweaked by the Warthog team in the UK. Expect fast frame rates and dynamic lighting.

*KONOKO'S ONLY FUTURE
IS TO AVENGE HER PAST.*





ONI

AN ACTION GAME LIKE NO OTHER.

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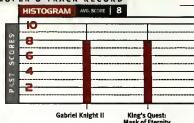
For screen shots and additional information visit oni.bungie.com

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Gabriel Knight III

Two Guys, A Girl, And A Vampire-Infested French Village

They say that good things come in threes. We don't have a clue as to the identity of this nebulous "they," but the smart money says it's Sierra when discussing the *Gabriel Knight* series. After all, the first *GK* game, *Sins of The Father*, was a critical, if not wholly commercial success, while its sequel, *The Beast Within*, sold well and was at the top of most critics' "best of" lists. The third game in the series, *Blood Of The Sacred, Blood Of The*

Damned, returns not only Gabriel and series creator/designer Jane Jensen to Schattenjager country, but also witnesses the reappearance of *GK*'s voice actor (and erstwhile sweet transvestite) Tim Curry. Is it any wonder that I consider this to be the *Quake III* of adventure games?

From the long mouthful of a title, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that vampires are involved. (Hey, with zombies in the first and werewolves in the second, you had to figure bloodsuckers would show

up eventually.) After beating some werewolf butt in *GKII* and retiring back to Schloss Ritter (Gabriel's ancestral castle in Germany) for some much needed rest and, we suspect, a few choice German brews, Gabriel and his supercilious assistant Grace are invited for a weekend at the home of a dethroned Prince. As expected (or there would be no game), it's not intended as a purely social visit. It seems that the Prince's family has been hounded for generations by a bunch of vampires and he worries that his infant son will become their next victim. Faster than you can say "foreshadowing," Gabriel's babysitting session abruptly ends

when vampires drop by for a quick bite and a tot "to go." Gabriel tracks the kidnappers to the French village of Rennes-le-Chateau, but loses their trail. And then, as "they" say, the real game begins.

As is the norm in a *Gabriel Knight* game, an insane amount of research has been done to write a fantasy tale with a real world slant. Jane Jensen, *GK* writer and designer tells us, "The story is based on a lot of material surrounding the Rennes-le-Chateau area, including many 'legends,' if you will, about the Cathars, Knights Templar, etc." Indeed, the overall plot is very ambitious, leading Gabriel and Grace to investigate a centuries-old enigma about lost treasure, the Holy Grail, and the bloodline of Jesus Christ. And don't be surprised if Gabriel learns something about his own past along the way — his lineage is always somehow entangled in the mystery. Sounding pretty good, huh?



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Sierra Studios
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → September '99
API SUPPORT → Direct 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The first two were literate and scary. *GKII* was a critical and commercial success. We're excited about the next incarnation.

THE HURDLE

The game engine has changed again. Can the series translate into 3D? And isn't that monster schtick getting a little old?

THE HIT

After two great games, we believe that designer Jane Jensen knows what she is doing. Prepare yourself for excellence.

Dynamic detective work, riveting action, and ... motor scooters? It must be a French thing.



FIVE QUESTIONS

JANE JENSEN, WRITER AND DESIGNER OF THE GABRIEL KNIGHT SERIES, WAS OFF AMUSED, YET MAYBE MORE THAN SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED, TO FIND HERSELF ONE-ON-ONE WITH A MEMBER OF THE PCXL STAFF.

Q: Each successive game in the *Gabriel Knight* series has used a radically different engine. Was this planned from the start or just a natural progression?
A: No, it wasn't planned. But with the games coming out several years apart, the technology simply moves too quickly for us to use the same engine twice. So far, anyway.

Q: Are French vampires snootier than American vampires?
A: Way snootier. And, of course, better educated.

Q: So far, we've seen zombies, werewolves, and vampires ... does this mean we can expect mummies in *GKIV*?
A: Mummies? Don't think so. I've been leaning towards ghosts, but who knows? By the time I start to write *GKIV*, something else may have taken my fancy.

Q: If a *Gabriel Knight* movie were made, whom would you choose to play Gabriel Knight?
A: God! I've worked with some great actors in these roles already, so it's not very polite of me to think of someone else. But I can say that when I originally wrote *GKs*, I had Harry Connick, Jr. in mind, because he's from New Orleans and he has that sort of bad boy thing down cold. I still think he'd make a great Gabriel Knight.

Q: Who would win in a fight: Tim Curry as Dr. Frankfurter or Tim Curry as Gabriel Knight?
A: Hahl Well, Frankfurter could win a dance contest, hands down. And he's certainly a better singer. But I can't see him fighting werewolves, can you?



This church is an exact replica of one located in the real town of Rennes-le-Chateau. Other real life landmarks are also in the game.

Fans of the series will be happy (or not — depending on what you thought about his attempt at a Cajun accent in the first *GK*) to hear Tim Curry return as the voice of Gabriel. Another familiar face is Detective Mosely, Gabriel's police friend from New Orleans who shows up under the guise of being on a "treasure hunt" vacation package, but whose behavior becomes increasingly suspicious (and if you remember the character, that's saying a lot). "Grace, Gabriel, and Mosely are all in the same town/hotel," Jensen explains, "so there's more interaction between the three of them." Jensen won't shed any light on the future of Gabriel and Grace's close, yet so far platonic, relationship "under pain of death," but says players will still rotate roles between "time blocks" over three days of game time, much as they did in *GKII*.

And what would a *Gabriel Knight* sequel be without a brand new graphics engine? Gabriel has gone from being a 2D sprite to a FMV actor, and now becomes (literally) a three dimensional character. Employing a new custom-built 3D graphics engine, the game

world is now yours to explore. Realtime lighting effects ensure that characters and environments look as natural as possible. Graphically, the characters look like a merger between the cartoon-like sprites of the first game and the actors of the second, producing a fresh look that, while not exactly photo-realistic, doesn't make them caricatures, either.

According to Jensen, the challenges of the new engine have been quite different from those presented in the making of *GKII*, specifically the wait for the engine to become stable enough to add content, 3D modeling, and character animation. "*GKIII* has been in development longer and will not be any cheaper. It has turned out to be much more complicated than we'd originally hoped," she adds.

As gamers will surely find out, the effort will be worth it. As the only game released this year to reference both vampires and Jesus Christ, *Gabriel Knight* isn't about to disappoint fans now.

— CHUCK OSBORN skulks around asking people what they know about Vaadaa to this very day



Okay everyone, French vampires smell like old socks and week-old Brie. Go get 'em!

KNIGHT MAGIC

In the interest of testing Gabriel Knight's mettle, we've decided to pit him against a few other famous challengers to see how he fares. If nothing else, we've learned that Gabriel may be an over-moussed wuss, but he's still cooler than those other guys.

JORDAN KNIGHT
WHO: Former member of sassy boy band (NKOTB)
COMPARES TO
GABRIEL: Affinity for hair gel and white T-shirts make this Knight look like Gabe's kid brother
COOL FACTOR: Wuh-Oh Ah-Wooah-Oh, Jordan doesn't have the right stuff

'BAYWATCH NIGHTS'
WHO: D-Grade Offspring Of A D-Cup Series
COMPARES TO
GABRIEL: Trade the sweltering sun-brats for hair gel and white T-shirts make this Knight look like Gabe's kid brother
COOL FACTOR: Watching lifeguards fight werewolves is comedy gold. Unfortunately, it was supposed to be a drama

'FOREVER KNIGHT'
WHO: Vampire cuties return ad nauseum on the Sci-Fi Channel
COMPARES TO
GABRIEL: Gabe has a swelled head, but vampire Nick Knight's swelled torso has coined the phrase "swold brivly"
COOL FACTOR: Nick, the whiny vampire cop, is staked in the final episode. Gabriel is always the stake-er, not the stake-ee.

'IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT'
WHO: TV spin-off of movie about race relations
COMPARES TO
GABRIEL: Cinnol O'Connor does his best to mang; the English language. Cajun Gabriel Knight: Ditto
COOL FACTOR: None — how can it be when all the characters talk about how damn hot it is in the South?







AGE EMPIRES THE AGE OF KINGS

Knights.

Castles.

Joan of Arc.

Oh my.

www.microsoft.com/games/age2



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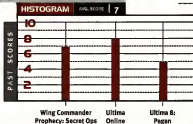


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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Ultima Ascension

... or will it be the ultimate ass-ension?

Writing a preview of *Ultima Ascension* should be the easiest thing in the world. By now, everyone should know the plot just by sheer repetition — Britannia is threatened, you as the Avatar go there to save it from The Guardian, there's some nonsense about Virtues, yadda yadda yadda. And it makes no difference if Origin decided to pull the Roman numerals from the

name (a la every *Star Trek* movie after *V*), this game is essentially *Ultima IX*. So there you have it. Well, that's only about ninety words so far — not quite enough to fill three pages — let's move on to something else.

So, how 'bout them Cowboys? Okay ... change of plans. Our executive editor (or as I call him behind his back, "Ol' Cracky") insists I stop goofing off and actually discuss *Ultima Ascension*.

Hmm ... that's just crazy enough to work. Well ... let's see ... following Origin's hiatus from Britannia after the release of *Ultima VIII* in 1994 (and the massively multi-player experiment, *Ultima Online*, in 1997), we were beginning to think that *Ultima Ascension* would end up on VH's "Where Are They Now?" along with The Thompson Twins. But after a five year wait, the final (or is it?) chapter of the *Ultima* saga looms before us. So, will it be worth the wait? Verily.

Series creator Richard Garriott (or as he's known in Britannia, Lord British), hopes that *UA* will be "the magnum opus of the series." Taking his cue from past successes, Garriott says that *UA* will combine the story and world simulation elements from what he considers to be the two best

Ultima games, *Ultima IV* and *Ultima VII*, into one slam-bang finale. To accomplish this (and benefiting from technological advances made since the last game), *UA* will be the first *Ultima* game played in a fully 3D environment. Then again, every old game is getting a 3D remake (check out *Pong* in this month's Gamescan), so our question is ... so what?

According to Garriott, Origin plans to make this "the most completely virtual world ever created." From what we saw during an extensive demo of the early code, that could be more than just PR gobbledey-gook. Back in the guise of the Avatar, you start out in your humble mansion (sorry, it's not based on Lord British's fabulous Austin home) in the "real world" before making the journey to Britannia. You can play with almost everything you see there, including light switches, the TV set, and stereo to name a few, while picking up supplies for your trip. Backing this effort to blend the real and fantasy worlds in to one immersive whole, *UA* will be the first non-LucasArts game to use THX sound. (Just don't pop an eardrum trying to crank up the volume to movie theater levels.)

So far, the graphics appear a little schizophrenic. At times, the overhead third-person view and detailed surroundings look great, but then, you'll see a tree and — bang — it's like you just wandered into the *Lords Of Lore III* engine. Any slight unevenness in presentation is a minor consideration for an RPG with such an outstanding pedigree — and we're hoping that it improves even more before release. Professional voice actors are to be hired for all characters, and to enhance the realism, mouth movements will

► p. 63



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Origin
PUBLISHER → EA
RELEASE DATE → Fall '99
API SUPPORT → D3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

It's *Ultima* — the longest running game series ever. That's reason enough for most RPG fans to take notice.

THE HURDLE

Ultima VIII's arcade sequences and the *Ultima Online* beta start-up debacle tarnished the *Ultima* name for some.

THE HIT

As the last in the series, look for Origin to go out with a bang and not a whimper — whimpering *Ultima* fans can be scary.

These guys are patiently waiting for the release of *Ultima Ascension*. We hope bat-wing shoulder pads for men aren't in style then.



Ultima Gallery

Unlike the hop-happy *Ultima VIII*, jumping in *Ultima Ascension* is done using a targeting cursor to ensure that the arcade elements aren't as damn annoying as in its frustrating predecessor.



Origin has created some of the most diverse, breathtaking environments found in any *Ultima* game so far. While most of the demo we saw was played from an overhead third person perspective, adjustable camera angles are also possible, as shown in these screen shots.

FIVE QUESTIONS

IT WASN'T EASY (NOTHING EVER IS IN BRITANNIA), BUT WE SAT DOWN WITH LEAD DESIGNER SETH MENDELSON TO DISCUSS *UA*, THE FUTURE, AND WORKING WITH GAME ROYALTY.

Q. Just whisper in my ear... why has *UA*'s development taken so long?

A. One of the main reasons was switching the game from the 3/4 perspective (as in *Ultima Online*) to a fully 3D engine. The team also took a year off to help complete *UO*. We believe in taking as much time as necessary to make the greatest *Ultima* game possible.

Q. Are there any major departures from previous *Ultima* games?

A. The world is 3D, and the player can position the camera anywhere they like. We have refined the stats system, and have only 3 stats: Intelligence, Dexterity, and Strength. Our Jumping system is much improved from *Ultima 8*. To jump, the player moves the cursor over the desired location, and the color of the cursor will show if the jump is possible.

Q. *UA* is supposed to be the last single-player *Ultima* game. Why stop?

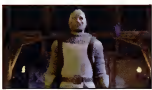
A. It's possible that we will go back to single player *Ultima*, but for now we plan to use our knowledge of making a great immersive world game with a great story, and add multiplayer to it. *Ultima Online* was a great start, and we feel it is only the tip of the iceberg as far as what can be done with massively multiplayer games.

Q. Were there any lessons learned doing *Ultima Online* that affected *UA*?

A. Helping the new/non-*Ultima* player get into the game. We wanted to make sure that people who did not have a lot of *Ultima* or RPG experience could easily get into the game. Also, after hearing from the fans, we also saw how important the virtues and the history of Britannia is to *Ultima*.

Q. What's it like working with a guy who calls himself Lord British?

A. It's ok, except for all the bowing and calling him sire all the time. [Ed — Coincidentally, we have the same problem with Rob.] Richard is the greatest person I've ever worked with in the game industry. He is ultra-creative, open to new ideas, and knows how to make great games.



It's a good thing he's becoming immortal — the Avatar looks old.

◀ P. 61 be synched to spoken lines, thus dispelling the "flapping jaw" curse found in most adventure games. Believe me, this made the requisite "choose your Virtues" scene with a traveling Gypsy much less cheesy than it would have been otherwise.

And then there's the story. Yes, The Guardian is back and, yes, Britannia is once again threatened by his evil. The *Ultima Ascension* name refers to resolving the long-running Guardian/Avatar story arc and the Avatar's eventual transcendence beyond mere mortality. Just like certain world leaders, Britannia has literally lost its Virtues (like compassion and loyalty), resulting in widespread destruction and desolation in the country's cities. Your job is to recover the Virtues, set things right, and defeat The Guardian. Starting out with one attack, you'll build your character and experience gradually, eventually gaining more complex fighting styles and spells. The 50-odd different kinds of creatures and monsters can be looted for weapons and magic accessories.



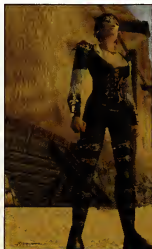
Virtues? I've got your virtues right here, baby.



Fans wishing for a party system will be disappointed — this Avatar is a loner, baby. But that doesn't mean you won't be interacting with friends and foes, both old and new to the series, in scripted in-game conversations.

The magic system is supposed to be "the most powerful magic system ever experienced in a fantasy game" (according to Origin's hype), but we still haven't seen enough of it to make a judgement. Elements such as casting spells from the eight circles of magic (including potions, rituals, and spells) and the inventory system have been simplified from previous *Ultimas* to make the process easier. At an estimated 40-100 hours of gameplay, *Ultima Ascension* should easily live up to Lord British's "magnus opus" promise. And if you can't trust royalty, then who can you trust?

— CHUCK OSBORN *has exactly one virtue. We won't tell you which, but it's not the one that helps you score with chicks*



Federal law now mandates skin-tight leather outfits in all RPG's.

ROYAL PAINS

If you thought the current crop of royals have cornered the market on scandal, then you don't know much about the real troublemakers Britannia has faced. Here are some rulers whose ascensions beyond the mortal realm won't be seen in an *Ultima* game.

EDMUND I

REIGNED → 939-946
KNOWN FOR → Furthering England's battle against the Norse Vikings

HOW HE DIED → Attempted to personally apprehend a banished robber; Edmund was overpowered, stabbed to death, and then ripped limb from limb by the robber's personal attendants

WILLIAM II

REIGNED → 1087-1100
KNOWN FOR → Surrounding himself with longhaired, half-naked, effeminate young men. Rumors speculated that the monarch, who never married, might be on "the other side."

HOW HE DIED → Shot in the head with an arrow by a close friend while hunting. Some historians think it was an assassination

EDWARD II

REIGNED → 1307-1327
KNOWN FOR → Deposed after his wife, Isabella (aka "She-Wolf of France") conspired with a lover to raise an army and invade England — just to get rid of her husband

HOW HE DIED → By order of his wife, a red-hot iron was inserted up his rectum to burn out his bowels. Ouch!

CHARLES II

REIGNED → 1660 and 1660-1685
KNOWN FOR → Called "The Merry Monarch," Charles II devoted his life to the pursuit of pleasure — which accounts for at least 13 mistresses and 14 illegitimate children.

Princess Diana was a descendant
HOW HE DIED → A lifelong Protestant (and avid assassinator), he quietly converted to Catholicism on his deathbed and stopped breathing



EDMUND I, KING OF ENGLAND



WILLIAM II, KING OF ENGLAND

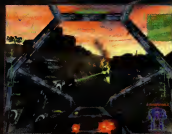


EDWARD II, KING OF ENGLAND



CHARLES II, KING OF ENGLAND

THEY WANT YOU DEAD.



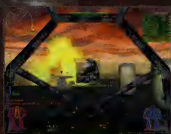
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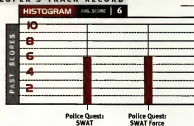
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



SWAT 3: Close Quarters Battle

Your chance to save L.A. — but would you want to?

The PCXL team gathered 'round the Sierra booth at E3 for three perfectly good reasons: To see the much-anticipated *Team Fortress 2*, to play some of the glorious *Tribes 2*, and to watch Sierra PR girls ride the mechanical bull (don't ask). What we didn't expect was *SWAT 3* just sitting there and looking so damned good.



The graphics are excellent, with highly detailed, motion-captured characters sporting swiveling torsos, so you can see them looking up, down, and around the photo-realistic environments. That said, it's *SWAT 3*'s realistic physics engine that really stands out. When a shot is fired, the engine calculates the speed of the bullet and the density of the objects it hits. The bullet then ricochets or goes clean through obstacles accordingly (people apply here as well). This painstakingly realistic endeavor isn't just for show either. When playing, you can fire a round through a wall, taking out the enemies on the other side or even nail two terrorists in one shot with the right gun and angle. Other items like Kevlar armor, windows, desks, and even lamps have their own properties, making for a live world of bullet-ricocheting fun. My only concern is that this feature will keep me from ever accomplishing my mission. I'll be too busy calling my shots, "Off the lamp, through the window, off the wall, and into the groin — nothing but flesh."

The game that houses this impressive technology is best described as *Rainbow Six* with cops (despite what the developers might tell us). As a SWAT commander, you must coordinate operations such as breaching rooms, diffusing bombs, and general anti-terrorist activities with a squad of five thinking computer characters. Game Designer Tommy Dargan describes the interaction between players and the NPC's like this, "Let's say the player issues the command, 'breach and clear.' The NPC's know this is a dynamic command meaning to breach a closed door and clear the room beyond. The closest

team member to the door knows what he has in his arsenal needed to breach the door. Once the door has been opened the team will enter the room under dynamic cover — flashbangs. The player made one command and the AI did



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Sierra Studios
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → November '99
API SUPPORT → Direct 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

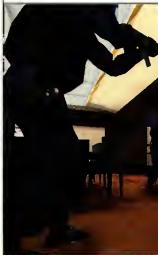
This third installment has taken a technological leap and will provide the gritty realism promised before, yet not delivered.

THE HURDLE

Rainbow Six started the trend of strategy-oriented squad-based first-person action games. *SWAT 3* will have stiff competition.

THE HIT

The physics, graphics, and AI all look astounding, but no multiplayer out of the box is likely to hurt its early appeal.



These captions are being written by Triumph, the Insult Dog Comic...



"The graphics in *SWAT 3* are on par with, if not better than, anything I have ever pooped on."

FIVE QUESTIONS

TOMMY DARGAN, GAME DESIGNER OF SWAT 3: CQB DIDN'T HIDE BEHIND AN ARMORED VEHICLE WHEN PCXL FIRED OFF THE DEADLY FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Did you actually record a SWAT Team saying "hut, hut" for the game, or is it merely a voice actor? It does make a difference you know.

A: Hut, hut? You're showing your age... Actually, we haven't recorded our dialogue yet — that happens in August.

Q: *Rainbow Six* with cops. Fair or completely out of line?

A: Inaccurate, not out of line. *R6* is a strategy game. *SWAT 3*: CQB is a game built on tactics, where each room, door, or person encountered in an environment dictates the player's next move or team command.

Q: Do all members of the SWAT team have mustaches?

A: Sure, and they all drive Corvettes, too.

Q: Is there any point in the game where the SWAT team plants evidence or brutalizes innocent motorists?

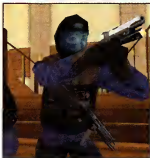
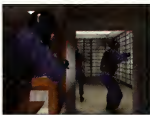
A: That's insulting to LAPD SWAT, to me, and to my team. Come on, can't we all just get along?

Q: Has working closely with the SWAT team limited you in any way? (I.e. You've been forced to change a cool level because it wasn't realistic.)

A: Nope. Once again, nobody's forcing anybody to do anything around here. *SWAT* has been totally cool with everything we've wanted to do. One of our advisors was the actor/model for all the motion capture movement. They've been very accommodating. They're all looking forward to beta testing *SWAT 3*.

the rest." Sierra showed a short demo of this type of AI, and it was pretty much as described — damn impressive. The one thing that wasn't evident from the demo was the AI of the terrorists, since none of them were yet in the game.

SWAT 3's 20 branching missions are set in the city of smog (L.A.) in the year 2005 (approximately the time the Lakers actually get a clue and win some play-off games). In campaign mode, you play through the series of missions depending on how the previous one ended. However, you can choose to just play any mission you want. Real world L.A. locations like LAX, the convention center (home of E3), storm drains, and entertainment centers will be familiar environments to Angeli-



nos. The range of missions includes hostage situations, bomb threats, carjackings, a home invasion, and anything else an extremist group can pull off in the confines of Los Angeles. Most missions will have your squad sent in with shoot to kill orders, but a few will actually have you trying to take down the enemy without taking them out.

The realistic physics engine, impressive graphics, and promising AI make *SWAT 3* a game I can't wait to play. Unfortunately, the developers inform us that there won't be any significant multiplayer out of the box — it will come in an add-on later in the year. In the increasingly crowded market of squad-based first-person shooters, the lack of multiplayer seems to be the only thing *SWAT 3* is missing. Oh, and you're trying to save L.A. — not exactly a noble cause.

— MIKE SALMON has spent way too much money and time on cabs in L.A. to even consider another visit to the vile city



LAPD LEVELS

SURE, saving this world from international terrorists is part of the job, but we all know what the LAPD really does. We've listed a few add-on levels that would definitely increase the realism, even if it doesn't increase the peace

TRAFFIC CLUBBINGS

THE MISSION: Take to the highways of L.A., pull over innocent motorists, and club them senseless

WEAPONS: The trusty billy club and the oversized mag-lite are all you'll need since the suspects are unarmed
REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: Rodney King

BORDER BEATINGS

THE MISSION: Pull over low-riding El Caminos, beat the passengers mercilessly, then ask for a green card

WEAPONS: Handle of revolver, billy club, and billy goats if available
REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: It happens every day

EVIDENCE PLANTING

THE MISSION: Arrive at a crime scene and begin to plant drugs, bloody gloves, and anything else that'll make your boss sick

WEAPONS: This stealth mission only requires guile, bad intentions, and no marks
REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: Mark Fuhrman

CELEBRITY STALKING

THE MISSION: Follow around black-listed actors/musicians, catch them with cross-dressing street ho's or piles of drugs, then collect the payola from the highest-paying tabloid

WEAPONS: VIP passes and handcuffs should do the trick
REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: The life and times of Robert Downey Jr.



"A coordinated assault on a room is mighty impressive — for me to poop on."

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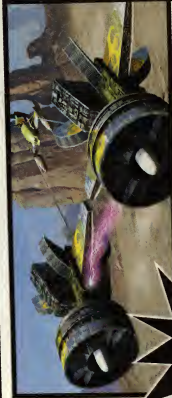
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FAM. SCORE



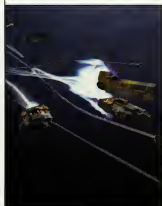
PREVIOUSLY ON HOMEWORLD

When we last checked in on *Homeworld* back in September '98, multiplayer had been the focus. Since then young whipper-snapper CEO Alex Gaudin (former lead programmer at EA) and his talented team at Relic have been focusing on the single player. As expected, things are looking good.

Homeworld

Plenty of hype, lots of game

One of the most annoying things about this industry is the incredible amount of time it takes to make a good game. Unless you're a Headgames or a Wizard-Works, games take years to finish—and good ones even longer. And when it's a game you're eager to play, the waiting seems exponentially longer. I suspect some games



are actually being delayed on purpose, knowing that the anticipation will be much greater than the game itself and artificially boost sales (cough, *DoKotono*). Count Relic's *Homeworld* in the list of good games we're stoked about playing.

First, a quick recap of what we know so far: *Homeworld* is, at its core, an RTS with resource gathering and unit building, but the playing field has been expanded ... and how. As if having three dimensions wasn't enough, Relic opted for limitless playing fields complete with hyperspace jumps. The graphical detail on the slew of space craft is amazing, the tactical level appears

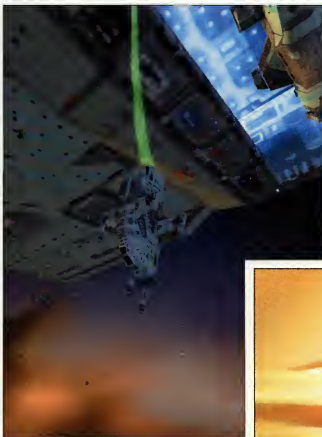
deep, the ship design is interesting and distinctive, and the overall atmosphere is superb. It has a silent, 2001-ish quality that is a great attempt to convey the vastness of space (though this serene quiet may be interrupted by the deafening blitz of a soundtrack penned and recorded by '70s rock dinosaur band Yes). When we last saw *Homeworld*, the multiplayer was about done, so the team has been spending most of their time working on the single player.

A linear sequence of missions sees you guide your "Battlestar Galactica"-esque mothership towards its homeworld, with the

survival of your race at stake, or at least a ship full of bikini-clad women. (Wait, you mean the name of the mothership's not the "Monkey Business"?) Actually, the story will be told through in-engine cutscenes, as you meet alien races, salvage for supplies, and do all the other stuff people do when wandering outer space. The vast expanse of the "playing fields" is graphically represented with huge motherships and the proportionally tiny fighters.

A new addition Relic has added is the ability of large capital ships to hyperspace themselves anywhere on the battlefield, although this will be a huge drain on resources. In all cases, there are a variety of ways to accomplish the mission objectives, like any good RTS. Says

Homeworld's Product Manager, Dan Amdur, "In some cases, not all objectives will need to be completed before the Mothership is recharged and ready to jump into hyperspace. But it's usually better



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Relic
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → September 1
API SUPPORT → DirectX9, OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

What hype? It's no hype, all game, remember? Unless that itself is hype, in which case ... oh well.

THE HURDLE

We still stick to our guns and say the interface and general control scheme will be tricky to get your head around.

THE HIT

We wanna play it already. Eagerly. That's always a good sign.

In space no one can hear you scream (we assume).



These ships desperately search the void of outer space in search of an amusing caption for this preview.



FIVE QUESTIONS

SIERRA'S DAN AMDUR WAS A GOOD SPORT WITH OUR MOCKING OF THE RIDICULOUS AD CAMPAIGN THEY HAD EARLY ON.

Q. Is *Homeworld* really "No hype, all game?"

A. We're humble people. I'll let my publicist answer that.

Q. Do you think there should be an unspoken rule that if a game gets "Game of the Show" award at E3, it should come out by the next E3?

A. No, don't you need an extra year to celebrate?

Q. Funny anecdote from the development of *Homeworld*:

A. Before we recorded the final voiceovers for the game, all the speech in the game was done by guys from Relic. There's nothing funnier than an alien with a Canadian accent, eh?

Q. Favorite "real life" shot-on-video show:

A. "When Animals Attack Stupid People Who Shouldn't Have Gotten Out of Their Cars in a Wildlife Preserve in the First Place."

Q. We're really excited about the upcoming game *Darkstone: Shadow Vengeance Master: Revenge of the Dark Shadowstone's Dark Stone Shadow 2: The Darkening: Arena*. Do you have any advice for the developers?

A. Don't forget a subtitle.

to stick around and fight it out — running's not the bravest option."

Let's talk about the graphics for a bit, because the ship textures, combined with the cool camera interface, make for some superlative-inspiring visuals. You wouldn't necessarily expect this from a bunch of little dots — until the camera is up close. The textures are 24-bit and the game supports resolutions up to 1600x1200.

It's no surprise that combat comprises the bread and butter of *Homeworld*, and the team is stressing complex tactics in the ship-to-ship battles. Lots of different formations let you adjust to the situation, and three tactical settings (evasive, neutral, aggressive) let you tailor your attack style to your threat assessment. Under evasive tactics for example, your ships fly faster and swerve to avoid fire, but their attack does less damage. This would be good when sending a squad of fighters to attack a capital ship. Aggressive tactics on the other hand keep ships in formation and will single-mindedly attack the enemy, concentrating their fire (probably a good tactic when you have the numbers in your favor and

want to hit 'em hard). Environmental factors like meteor showers will come into play too.

All the strategy and scale may make it seem tough to control units and keep track of what's going on, however. It sure seems that way to us right now. But Relic, naturally, assures us everything's cool. They aim to start out only using the 2D space in the battlefield, then slowly incorporate more and more 3D elements as you get comfortable in the hot seat. "We've spent a lot of time making sure the interface is intuitive and easy to use. Because *Homeworld* is so different than anything else out there, people think it's harder to play than it actually is. People see the game and think it looks hard to learn, but within 10 minutes of actually sitting down and driving, they're ready to go," says Amdur.

I think it would have been cool if the whole game was more non-linear, and the hotspots on the sectors of space (like resources, elements of interest, etc.) needed to be scouted for. Then you'd need to plan out each jump, with scouting on the movements of alien fleets as well. That would have

ALL ABOUT ED

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT ED

Not showing up for work due to the flu (and consequently, not finishing this section) has encouraged us to think about all the things that make Ed ... well ... Ed. Who is Ed Lee? Where is he going? What makes him tick (besides the plastic explosives under his shirt)? We answer all these questions in our first ... and undoubtedly last ... Ed retrospective.

JANUARY 1998 → Ed moves to California to begin working for *Next Generation* magazine.

FEBRUARY 1998 → Attends first industry party. Passes out under a table, missing his pants. Ed's place in gaming legend is secure.

APRIL 1998 → Leaves exciting career at *Next Generation* and joins crew of fledgling publication *PC Accelerator*.

MAY 1998 → First E3. Ed learns art of schmoozing and surviving the best-of-babe brush-off. Vows never to return after pants-related accident.

OCTOBER 1998 → Discovers the word "pants."

NOVEMBER 1998 → Career reaches new heights as "pants" becomes big hit with "the kids."

JUNE 1999 → Catches flu. Doctor suggests Ed begin wearing pants.



added a larger strategic backdrop to the missions. But, oh well ... Relic's version sounds fun too. We can live with it ...

— **ED LEE** is already penning his own RTS concept with non-linear missions in a vast universe. Wish him luck



The flight model in *HW* is much more enjoyable when you're not wearing pants.

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Sequels Strike Back

We tend to think of original games as winners, and of sequels as the spawn of permanently-smiling marketing flacks, where games in a continuing series just mean more inflated BS. It's usually that way with movies (look at *The Phantom Menace*), so why would games be any different? Not so fast, Chester. A few sequels really are good. *Need for Speed: High Stakes* is the best so far, and *Descent 3* came out smelling like roses. Meanwhile titles like *Beat Down* and *Jeff Gordon XS Racing* flop into the Hall of Ass. Sequel or not, PCXL's reviews will give you the straight dope, because "original" does not always equal "good." Who remembers Col. Sanders Original Recipe? Now the only business KFC gets is prison contracts, nursing home catering, and starving street mimes.



NFS: HIGH STAKES: More like need for a good radar detector...

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

An impressive coup — like waking up with Heather Graham if you look like Austin Powers

10

A gaming classic you'll want to keep on your shelf, and well worth your hard earned dollars

9

Terrific game with a few bad points, but not enough to keep it from being a must-buy

8

A game as dependable as the nice girl, without the pizzazz of the hottie who won't talk to you

7

A clever idea or gameplay innovation put this game barely above the rest of the pack — barely

6

More middle of the road than a flattened racoon, but slightly less smelly

5

A game you wouldn't spit on, but probably wouldn't kiss either

4

One good point does not a game make. Pass it by and watch it slip into bargain bin oblivion

3

Barely worth your time or trouble. Let the Wal-Mart shoppers have it

2

Hold your breath. This game reeks worse than take-out from Hardee's

1

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the PC ACCELERATOR Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.



SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Heed our warning: Stay away from these games at all costs.



HALL OF 'SASS'

These are the games that never have to stand in line, that get ushered past the crowd, right by the game bouncers, past the velvet rope, and inside the Hall of Sass, where gaming is good and right.

NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

Publisher → EA
Developer → EA
Rating → 9
How good is it? The best of the NFS series so far, with terrific graphics, new damage modeling, and a "career" mode that lets you win cash and use it to improve your car.

EVERQUEST

Publisher → 989 Studios
Developer → Verant Interactive
Rating → 9
How good is it? Good enough to get Mike Salmon hooked, even if he claims he's playing it just to prove his hatred.

TRIBES

Publisher → Sierra
Developer → Dynamix
Rating → 9
How good is it? Tribes is possibly the only game to seriously challenge Quake II's dominance for PCXL multiplayer time spent.

NHL 98

Publisher → EA Sports
Developer → EA Sports
Rating → 9
How good is it? Despite our distaste for NHL 99's seemingly random goals, its predecessor remains what is perhaps the best sporting — and fighting — game on the PC.

HALL OF ASS

This is the loser game the bouncer not only shoves away from the door, but picks up, puts in his trunk, and drives to the worst part of Gary, Indiana — location of the infamous Hall of Ass. Does it get any worse?

SHATTERED LIGHT

Publisher → Simon & Schuster
Developer → Calware
Rating → 1
How bad is it? Take a game so buggy, the Sierra Sports QA department would give it the thumbs up. Now multiply by Extreme Rider, and you have this disaster.

JEFF GORDON XS RACING

Publisher → ASC Games
Developer → Real Sports
Rating → 1
How bad is it? When the only way to tell what track you're on is by which corporate logo you're just passed, you're in trouble.

VIGILANCE

Publisher → SegaSoft
Developer → Post Linear
Rating → 1
How bad is it? An attractive game that tried too hard, with awful control, infuriating jumping puzzles, and no save points.

BEAT DOWN

Publisher → Hot Bit
Developer → Soar Software
Rating → 1
How bad is it? Imagine Myth, but pretend it's bad. Now add repetitive beat box music and dated graphics and give yourself a serious head wound. You got the idea.

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming car comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said card. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET



GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING



DEVELOPER → Outrage Entertainment
 PUBLISHER → Trentum/Interplay
 REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM, 4MB
 3D accelerator, 4x CD-ROM, 210MB
 hard disk
 IDEAL → PII 400, 32MB RAM,
 500MB hard disk, force feedback stick,
 big-ass video card

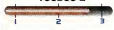
Descent 3

Because we all love to go down again and again

ACCELE-RATED

Great looking game with tons of cool eye candy, and smooth framerate even when butched up to 1024x768 in D3D mode.

VOODOO 2



TNT



API SUPPORT: D3D, Glide, OpenGL

Probably the most interesting thing about *Descent 3* is that after so much hype about using two 3D engines, adding planetside sections, and taking the game out of the mines, it's still *Descent*. The feel, the gameplay, even the buffed-up, technology buzzword-splattered look will be pleasantly familiar to fans of the first two. If the developers, Outrage, know how to do one thing right, it's create a real sense of upgraded continuity. But, oh, what upgrades...

Imagine *Unreal* mating fondly with *Descent 2* — that pairing's bouncing offspring is the *Descent 3* engine. Top-notch lighting effects, sharp textures, a horde of resolution and color depth choices, Direct3D, OpenGL, and 3DFx support supply the options to make the game look fine on almost any video card/processor configuration. The terrain engine used for the above-ground sections puts out smoothly contoured, natural looking landscapes, while the indoor engine (used far more frequently) is still a bit on the sharp,

angular side, but that's the *Descent* look.

Weapons' fire is chock full of dazzling lighting effects. Objects blow up in a beautifully glowing haze of fire and smoke, while the evil robots explode into mechanized scrap in an extremely satisfying pyrotechnic display. So, yeah, the game looks great. And it sounds great, too, with excellent sound effects and the most interestingly eclectic and distinctive soundtrack we've heard in a while. Still, the most noteworthy part of *Descent 3* is the diversity of



Other 3D shooter developers take note: This is the way to make a 3D map! Now why can't you putzes do it too?



There it is — the den of corporate evil and sin.

missions. There are only 15 (plus two secret levels), but they're all pretty phenomenal and enormous. Forget all that "find red key for red door/blow up reactor/escape" nonsense from the old games. In *D3*, the missions include breaking into a prison to locate a held scientist, defending a Mars station's energy reactors from attack, and stealing data from computer records and transferring it into another computer. There are strategic levels where you must move slowly, taking down surveillance enemies from long distance so they won't set off alarms, as well as a huge urban-based missions where you must infiltrate headquarters. And, there's even one where you have to blow up a reactor. Of course, there are

hellishly hard boss robots to kill now and then, too.

Enemy AI is another high point. These little robots can dodge incredibly well. They can also see and hear, and when the AI screws up, you can pass it off to the fact that they are, after all, just infected robots. The storyline commendably takes a front seat, with complex mission objectives following the plot of the Material Defender as he (finally) gets to take the fight to the evil, robot-virus producing corporation PTMC (after they left him for dead in *D2*). It's well-written, well-constructed, and rather politically charged.

Given the emphasis on plot and great levels, it seems strange that you have endless lives in the game. When the Defender blows up, he simply respawns at the closest waypoint. Just as in multiplayer, all his weapons will be floating in a cloud near his last demise, waiting to be picked up again. Given how

hard the game is (it's really hard), this is rather welcome, but still tends to cheapen the general experience. As usual, multiplayer options are extensive, with plenty of network (IPX, TCP/IP, PXOnline, Heat, etc) and game choices. Like past *Descent* games, *D3* runs very well online, and the unique playability consistently makes it one of the most distinctive multiplayer experiences around.

There have been a number of games trying to snatch the sci-fi shooter throne from the *Descent* series, but make no mistake and accept no substitutions, the real deal is back, and it's terrific. While those gamers who found the past games too hard to handle won't be converted by *D3*, this is a fast, tough, intensely involving action experience.

— JASON D'APRILE has since suffered his own *Descent* into madness, but is much better now



(Left) We have no idea what was just blown up here, but it shore is purty. (Right) Infiltrate this ominous base to bring back one of your own.



GRAPHICS

Sharp, varied textures, great looking, well-animated robots, and a helluva lot of eye candy.

SOUND

3D sound support rocks, sound effects are great, and the music has a distinctly funky '50s sci-fi sound to it.

DEPTH

The sheer amount of control and varied mission objectives gives the single player game plenty of depth, but all those multiplayer options give it the staying power.

DESIGN

Excellent, varied and distinctive single player missions, due to the well designed, intense levels, along with top notch multiplayer variety.

RATING 9

+ Pluses

- Terrific level design
- Plenty of multiplayer joy
- It's just plain fun to be able to move in any direction you want!

- Minuses

- Endless single player respawning
- Not enough missions
- It's tough



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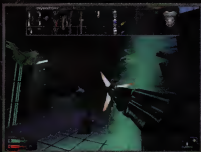
system shock 2

She doesn't need to use her body
to get what she wants...

She's got yours.



Ultimate high-tech weaponry includes fully configurable, detailed equipment for amazing gameplay depth and action.



Frightening 3-D realism gives you an all-tooreal first-person perspective. In fact, the environment is so true-to-life, your enemies are even sensitive to light and sound.



Intriguing character generation lets you choose from three distinct personalities, each with their own special weapons and abilities.

You wake aboard the Von Braun with a mind-altering implant in your brain and no memory of recent events. As you wander the dark, eerie decks of the derelict spacecraft, you discover an alien material is slowly taking over the ship — feeding upon the flesh of your former comrades, leaving zombies and corpses in its wake. Behind the engulfing terror, you sense the presence of the evil cyber-being, SHODAN. She is seductive and sinister. And she pulls all the strings in the most chilling role playing game ever. Enter Shodan's terrifying world to discover her ultimate plan — or die trying. For all the gory details, visit www.lglass.com



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JAGGED ALLIANCE[®] 2



Your mercenaries will climb, swim, jump and crawl their way through deadly firefights.



Fight to free an entire nation – sector by sector, town by town.



Interact dozens of characters. Treat them well, and they'll support your cause. Treat them badly, and they'll stab you in the back.

Take the blend of strategy, role-playing and tactical combat that made Jagged Alliance one of the **best games of all time**^{*}. Add dozens of new weapons. Over 150 unique characters. Your own custom mercenary. Incredibly realistic combat. Thousands of lines of digitized speech. Face off against an array of hungry predators, from ferocious enemy soldiers to dark secrets lurking underground. The result is the perfect feeding grounds. The only thing missing is **YOU**.

The Best of Strategy

Nonlinear gameplay, blistering day and night battles, and advanced tactical combat.

The Best of Role-Playing

Create your own character, improve your team's skills, and explore a huge world.

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-Steve Bauman, Games Business Magazine

Go to <http://pcx1ign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 107

^{*}As rated by Computer Gaming World and PC Games.

Check it out at www.talonssoft.com or call 1-800-211-6504 to pre order

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SIBTECH



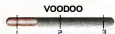
DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
REQUIRED → P66, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, Direct3D-compatible card
IDEAL → PII 450, 64MB RAM, 200 MB hard drive, Voodoo 3/TNT 2 card, Slidewinder gamepad, LAN

Star Wars Episode I: Racer

The fastest game on two engines and a piece of elastic

ACCELE-RATED

The main factor for any racing game's performance is frame rates, so in the (soon to be replaced) TNT versus Voodoo2 battle, the Voodoo2 wins by a slim margin, with the Riva close behind. Also, it's worth mentioning that *Racer* requires a 3D-compatible card.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

The pod racing scene from *Star Wars* was one of the coolest parts of the movie, and their design — two jet engines pulling a tiny pod — was an inspired update of the chariot racing scene from *Ben Hur*. It's hard to imagine the inevitable game version of that scene coming close to capturing the same sense of exhilaration and speed as the movie, but you know what? With *Racer*, LucasArts comes pretty darn close.



Damn Jaws, all they are is trouble.

The physics model and speed lend itself to comparisons to the excellent PlayStation game *Wipeout*, with the podracers' anti-gravity repulsor lift technology combined with massive forward thrust. The development team has done a good job simulating the forces that would occur with two huge front-mounted engines, including the ability to rein an engine back to help turn. But the simulation element doesn't get in the way of the prime goal of pure arcade-y racing. Add the solid collision detection, engine overheating, and turbo boosts, and there's some depth to the simple adrenaline injection. The player gets the feeling that he's barely in control of a ridiculously fast and dangerous vehicle — which is pretty great. Although the racing model isn't as demanding as say, *Wipeout*'s directional air brakes, there's still a bit of potential upward mobility in the skill department here.

Besides Tatooine and its Boonta Eve circuit, races take place on your snow planet, your jungle planet, a water planet, an abandoned mining planet — all the usual suspects. You race through the easy version of each world's track first, then later versions become longer and more challeng-

ing as more of the tracks are unlocked. The track designs are well laid out and have good variety, including elevation changes, multiple shortcuts, jumps, and environmental hazards. Also, LucasArts does a good job of hiding the clipping plane, which improves frame rate. The single player "tournament mode" functions as a backstory to Anakin

KNOW YOUR RACERS

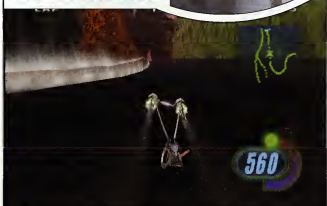
BEN QUADRINAROS → The goofy looking one who stalls out at the starting line, only to have his engines go haywire and explode.

WAM SANDAGE → Slirms into a rock, outcropping in the first lap, offs himself.

ODY MANDRELL → Takin' out of the race when a pit droid gets stuck into one of his engines. Supposedly speaks Spanish.

TEEMTO PAKALES → Offed by the Sand people on the 5. cand lap. Get 'em, I checked!

MARS GUO → The one Sebulba offs right before the start of the third lap by chucking a wrench into his engine. Also, the office favorite is multiplayer.



Tracks range from sublime to the unreal to the downright ridiculous in *Racer*.



"Yippee, I can't act, but the ever-annoying Jar Jar made me look good in comparison!"

"Annie" Skywalker's character, as he has to build up his pod through a succession of races. This is the character you start with, but with each first place finish, you unlock another racer to use, ending in Sebulba's in the Boonta Eve race. In a somewhat confusing move, your status (in terms of how far you've progressed through the tournament) doesn't have anything to do with which pod racer you are actually controlling at that point. All the upgrades you purchase with your winnings get applied to whatever racer you choose for any given race. So, you really can't identify with a particular character throughout.

Place first in everything and you unlock all the racers and tracks, including the cool mirrored versions. But for the fortunate few, the real replay value is in the multiplayer. If you have access to a LAN, squeal with joy — you can race all 22 tracks with up to eight players. If not, cry like a little girl — or go to the Internet Gaming Zone (zone.msn.com), which simulates a LAN on the Internet. Despite rumors, we couldn't find any noteworthy bugs, and performance is pretty non-laggy.

Comparing this game to its counterpart, *The Phantom Men-*



More speed than backstage at a KISS concert.

ace, and the previously released *X-Wing: Alliance*, it's pretty clear that we had much more fun with Racer than these others.

Even though its title is the most blah (hope they didn't wear themselves out thinking of it or anything), *Racer* is the only one of these three to really deliver the goods. As futuristic racers go, it is much more fun and involving to race a pod racer than any of those faceless, soulless *Wipeout* clones out there.

—ED LEE still hasn't came up with a creative way to get out of writing his bio

GRAPHICS

Pretty solid, doesn't blow you away or anything. Pretty *Wipeout*-ish.

SOUND

Never a problem for LucasArts. Cool engine sounds and killer soundtrack, although "Duel of the Fates" is a tad overused.

DEPTH

Multiplayer is the key to this game's depth, single player is too easy, and no difficulty levels.

DESIGN

Token tournament mode doesn't add much, but the real achievement is the solid racing engine.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Good variety in tracks and pod racers
- Cool physics model
- It's *Star Wars*

- Minuses

- Many missed opportunities in single player
- Single player too easy
- Too easy to lose money on races

STAR WARS CAST-AWAYS

Liam Neeson, Jans Ulyett, Natalie Portman. That was the cast that ended up in *The Phantom Menace*, but, because of the fantastic success of *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, Lucas originally planned to hire TV actors instead. These are the script snippets that you won't see anywhere else:

THE AN-DI MENACE



THE AN-DI MENACE SHOW

AN-DI JIN → Now, look right there, Obann... that cotton-pickin' lightsabre stays in your shirt pocket, y'hear?

OBARNI-WAN → Aww, Anj... [snorts]... I reckon I don't need it, what with the Force making me a lethal weapon and all.

QUEEN BEA → Annonn-Dill! There you are, An-Di. Now, you promised to take Opiekin to see the Jedi Council! Would you mind takin' these prize-winnin' preserves to that sweet Mr. Yoda over in Mount Coruscant? It's just up the way...

OPIEKIN → Yippee!

AN-DI JIN → Ahn jes waitin' fer our ride, Queen Bea. Here it is now.

COME-JAR → Gawwaaallicc! Mesa plum happy to drive yous, An-Di.

SEIN WARS



SEIN WARS

QUI-JER → So, what's the deal with Wookies?

OBI GEORGE → Huh? What do you mean? I don't follow you, Jer.

QUI-JER → I mean, they look like a bear, they talk like a bear, they even smell like a bear... not that there's anything wrong with that...

OBI GEORGE → No way! Nothin' against bear smells here.

QUI-JER → So, how'd they get into space? Who was the guy who saw a Wookiee and decided "Yes, I think we should invite him to join the Imperial Senate?" I mean, woudya even date a Wookiee? I wouldn't!

QUEEN ELAINE → [raises hand] Oh, yes, I did... and boy, was it wowood! Those animals could teach Jedis a thing or two in the old "Force" tricks area, if ya know what I mean.

JAR-MER → [slides through door] Wah! Mesa hungry, Jer. [heads for cabinet and grabs cereal box with tongue]

EMPIRE HOPE



EMPIRE HOPE

DARTH MAUL → Aaaaargh!

NURSE → We've got a guy glyced in half with a lightsabre. Stat!

DOCTOR → Let's operate. Stat!

DARTH MAUL → Ow.

THE SPORTSNIGHT MENACE



THE SPORTSNIGHT MENACE

CASEY → Hello, this is Casey-Gon McJin.

DAN → And this is Dan-Ry-Kenobi, we've got the Droid Olympics in Naboo, Pod Racing action in Tatooine and the final Ewok-hunting results from Endor. All this and much more after the break.

ISAAC JAR → [over earphones] Mesa think yousa guys do great!

CASEY → Shame about Isaac's stroke. [dramatic pause]

DAN → So, what's going on between you and the Queen?

CASEY → Queen?

DAN → Queen Dana. Remember her? We do a sports show to pay her planet's taxes.

CASEY → Oh, that Queen.

DAN → So?

CASEY → What? She's a nice girl — wears a little too much makeup — but nothing's going on.

DAN → Here's the thing: I saw you kiss the other night. [dramatic pause]

CASEY → And I think someone's playing mind tricks on you.

QUEEN DANA [ever headset] → How much do you guys love me — right now — this very minute? We've got an exclusive with Jabba! And you're back in five... four... three... two... one!

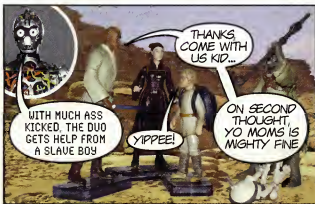
STAR WARS

EPISODE 1

THE PCXL SPECIAL EDITION

EPISODE 1: THE PCXL EDITION

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. It's a dark time for the Rebellion ... whoops, wrong movie. In order to be trained in the kick ass ways of the Jedi, Obi Wan has turned to Mace Windu as his new (and more ass kicking) master.



REVIEWS



DEVELOPER → Big Age Productions
 PUBLISHER → LucasArts
 REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM,
 125MB hard drive, AX CD-ROM,
 Direct3D-compatible card
 IDEAL → PII 266, 64MB RAM, 335MB
 hard drive, Aureal A3D card, Microsoft
 SideWinder gamepad

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace

Four out of five Jedis agree: This is not the game you are looking for

ACCELE-RATED

Colored lighting and some fog effects are the main reasons this game even needs a 3D card. So, use whatever card you want (as long as it's Direct3D-compatible) because it probably won't make much difference. It's not like you'll be pushing its limits or anything.

VOODOO 2



TNT



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



API SUPPORT: Direct3D



These are the blue girls that graced our May '99 cover — see, we told you they were in the movie somewhere.

Reviewing a game like *The Phantom Menace* is a difficult task. No matter what you say about it, fans have gotten themselves so worked up over the film and anything associated with it that they'll buy the game sight-unseen and expect perfection. In fact, if you were one of those people who convinced yourself that *The Phantom Menace* was an example of incredible filmmaking before you even set foot in the theater (despite bad acting, a weak script, and annoying characters), then you may be able to do the same here. Thank the Force you didn't stand a month in line waiting for this game, though.

Just like its cinematic daddy, *The Phantom Menace* is a loose collection of clichés that harks all the way back to *Pitfall* for the Atari 2600. Though it suggests a *Tamb Raider* influence, it owes much more to the *Super Star Wars* series on the SNES. It also reeks of practically every other thoughtless movie license game, whereby you take the lead character on a trip to tedious, recreating cinematic scenes on the small screen. So if you still haven't seen *SW: TPM*, then don't play the game first.

Considering that *SW: TPM* was basically a scavenger hunt (for people, ship parts, box office receipts), the movie translates well into an adventure. As one of



I've got a bad feeling about this.

four characters — Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon Jinn, Queen Amidala, and Captain Panaka — the player follows the linear flow of the movie as well as re-enacting some scenes you may have missed. (Bet you didn't know how much box pushing there was in *TPM*.) Most of the game is spent searching for a button to push, battling enemies, and talking via dialogue trees to other characters, while following the story. Any boring parts of the plot (like 70% of it) are dealt with in cutscenes. Since the Pod Race is featured in a separate game, you only get to watch a few Pods shoot by before the next level loads.

LucasArts' dip into the pool of gaming nostalgia comes at a price. While the game is fully 3D (and requires 3D acceleration), its Force-d overhead viewpoint makes most of the action 2D. Character AI (I'm being generous) relies on simple patterns. It's the type where a boss blocks your shots while lumbering towards you, does a roll, and then walks away leaving his backside unprotected. I defeated one boss (who, sadly, wasn't in the movie, thus depriving him of his own action figure) by staying far enough away not to "activate" it, and then pumping laser shots until its eventual ascension to the polygonal afterlife. It beats learning a new attack algorithm ... but it's not exactly fun, either.

It's not all bad, though. Strategic use of the Jedi lightsaber and Force powers make the earlier levels somewhat interesting, since a general rule of the game is to

avoid a direct fight whenever possible. But later levels bog down into escorting various characters from one area to another. If *SW: TPM* had been released in 1994, I might have more good things to say. But I was expecting a step forward, not two steps back.

— **CHUCK OSBORN** likes to push crates around in his spare time. That explains his stilted social life

GRAPHICS

Not bad, but requiring a 3D accelerator is like swatting a fly with a sledgehammer.

SOUND

You can't go wrong with the *Star Wars* theme. And the voice acting matches that of the movie: Bland.

DEPTH

You'll finish it in one weekend and then never play it ever again. There's no multiplayer, of course.

DESIGN

Good for a dose of retro gaming, but why bother when you could be playing *Jedi Knight* instead?

RATING 5

+ Pluses

- Strongly emphasizes strategy over mayhem
- Relive your console glory days
- It's *Star Wars*

- Minuses

- Decrepit design
- Wastes license's potential
- Queen Amidala's whining

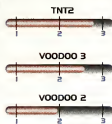
DEVELOPER → EA Seattle
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
REQUIRED → P166 with 3D card (P200 without), 32MB RAM, 50MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL → P11 300, 64MB RAM, 350MB hard drive space, buffered 3D card, Force Feedback controller

Need for Speed: High Stakes

It's basically a manual for how to score ...

ACCELE-RATED

The 32-bit textures on the TNT2 provided a much more colorful and crisp appearance, but the Voodoo 3 had better frame rates and let you play at 1600x1200.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide



Just marvel at the detail here, folks. That is "it."



Hey, if I wasn't in last place, how else would you get to see all those other cool cars?

What is there left to say about a driving series that can seem-

ingly do no wrong? The fourth iteration of the *Need for Speed* series has arrived with all the power and grace of the over-endowed sex machines that it offers up for fantasy test drives. *Need for Speed: High Stakes* eschews any numerical placement in the series, but still offers more than just a slight upgrade from *NFS3*.

The big push here is the all-new *High Stakes* Career mode, whereby you earn cash racing over a variety of tracks. Circuits are divided in to three categories — Tournament, Knockout and *High Stakes*. The object is to place high, win big, then use your earnings to upgrade and repair your car, or buy a better one (say, move up from a Porsche 911 to the McLaren F1 or Lamborghini Diablo — tough choice, huh?). While the first two categories are pretty familiar, the *High Stakes* mode has way more punch. In these one-on-one races, the runner-up loses his car.

Even if you keep the car, the detailed damage model means that you'll be shelling out wads of dough for repairs. Finally, this is a racer with old licensed cars that can, in fact, be damaged. Bang up the front fender, and the headlights will be out of whack or broken, and come the next race, if you

didn't repair them, they'll still be that way. Damage is divided into several categories (suspension, body, engine, steering) and when it costs to repair, and you're down to the cheapest car on the circuit, it changes your attitude behind the wheel.

On top of that, *High Stakes* has all the modes from *NFS3*, including an upgraded Hot Pursuit option, whereby the cop can actually define wingmen, switch between all the units on the map, and even give some basic commands to the rest of the squad. It's even more fun this time around chasing down the BMWs, Lamborghinis, and Ferraris, while having a sense of control over the situation beyond *Hot Pursuit's* previous straight racing.

The 13 cars (plus six different pursuit cop cars) all handle differently (and I'd like to say "accurately," although when do I get to drive a Ferrari in real life?), and can be raced on the 19 tracks that cover the familiar gamut of environments. The exceptionally detailed, eye candy-fied graphics we've come to expect from the series are here in abundance, and the whole presentation, combined with the exceptional control, makes this the best racing game out there.

Importantly, EA has finally added Internet play in the form of a still-beta EA Racing Online service, so you'll be able to race and even play *High Stakes* with strangers everywhere. The evocative music of the series is getting a tad stale, though the sound effects are high quality. And, while the trees and other



Ha! My Beamer can whup your Beamer.

background objects are still 2D, the only real caveat is that the tracks are still, well, tracks. Perhaps in the next one, we'll actually have these gorgeous 3D landscapes open to exploration and freedom of movement, instead of just having to stick to the road.

— JASON D'APRILE wrote this review naked [Ed. — A visual we really didn't need]

GRAPHICS

Check full of eye candy, slick effects, detailed cars, and cool looking tracks.

SOUND

The awesome roar of the engines is enough to shake the floor, and everything else is good too.

DEPTH

Lots of cars, tracks, and play modes. Fun as sin (the unlawful carnal kind, not the code-bloated game kind).

DESIGN

Top-notch arcade racing with a perfect feel. Addition of consequences to a racing game adds a great deal to the whole genre.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Great graphics and sound
- Damn near perfect control and feel
- Plenty of cool tracks, hot cars and awesome game modes

Minuses

- The music is a little haggard
- You can't roam free!
- I don't own any of these cars and therefore can't use them to score

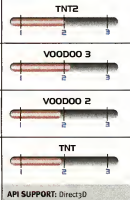
DEVELOPER → Angel Studios
 PUBLISHER → Microsoft
 REQUIRED → Pentium 3 (with 3D accelerator), P200 (without 3D accelerator), 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM Drive, 300MB HD Space
 IDEAL → Pentium 300, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerator (Voodoo 3 is best)

Midtown Madness

Car Wars: Chicago-style

ACCELE-RATED

Some delicious visual treats for your retinal consumption can be had with a cornucopia of 3D cards. The Voodoo 3 and TNT2 performed excellently, but the new drivers meant that the TNT and Voodoo 2 actually looked and played nearly as good. Without a 3D card, you are stuck in the land of software rendering, and it ain't pretty. Now get a 3D card before we hurt you.



NO DOUGHNUTS



ARKANSAS STATE POLICE

Survive!... These cops have more wackiness with the mirrors on the inside, but they did set up "d.i.s.s." for Clinton, so you can probably negotiate with them. Just tell 'em you're real tight with Slick Willy.

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bad news. These are the same brainless clockwatches that ransacked Harrison Ford in *The Fugitive*. You think they're gonna cut you any slack when they clock your Mustang 17 over 100 mph down East Wacker Drive? Plus they always wear those really stupid check-board caps.

CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

Fixed at all costs. Ever since Eric Star's career went in the toilet, these steroid cases have had a "chip" on their shoulder: the size of a damn Winniebag. Speed on their turf and they'll Rodney King you as.

If you liked the chase scenes from *The French Connection* and *The Blues Brothers* as much as I did, then get ready to go

absolutely apeshit over Microsoft's latest driving game. *Midtown Madness* is a wildly original title that follows a refreshingly simple premise: Jump behind the wheel of 10 different vehicles, ranging from a new and annoyingly yuppie VW Beetle to a City Bus, and then just go medieval on the streets of Chicago.

Game developer Angel Studios has done a bang-up job of re-creating the Windy City's downtown in lavish 3D detail. Chicago's bustling infrastructure has been very convincingly replicated with famous landmarks like Wrigley Field, Daley Plaza, and the Sears Tower all in their appropriate places. Working traffic lights, operational swing bridges, pedestrian-choked sidewalks, asshole drivers — they're all here and damned if they aren't in your way. Full-blown weather effects like rain and snow can further cramp your style by noticeably reducing your car's road-holding ability.

Blasting around this virtual metropolis at high velocity against a pack of similarly-deranged AI drivers is the core gameplay focus



Screw Popeye Doyle. I'm gonna start hitting people.



A little snow won't slow down an F-350 Pickup driver with attitude.

in *Midtown Madness*. Checkpoint races require you to hit a series of gates in any order you choose, while Blitzes are just you alone, and finally, the Clock and Circuit Races pit you against the rabid AI pack in a series of cordoned-off laps sans traffic. You can also dial up as many as eight human opponents on the MSN Gaming Zone for Cops & Robbers, where you chase gold and deposit it at the bank.

Don't feel like running one of the game's organized races? Screw it. Just select cruise mode and perform whatever moving violations your felonious little mind can conjure. Rocketing under the L Train tracks like Popeye Doyle in *The French Connection* gave me a sense of movie déjà vu that was almost painful. The "no barriers" sense of freedom that this game gives you is quite amazing.

The vehicle choices are equally inspired. Microsoft has secured licensing for a handful of models from VW, Cadillac, Panof, and Ford, and fleshed them out with a full-sized city bus, a semi truck, and a 600-hp race car. Although the individual driving physics aren't bad, the collision dynamics that ensue when you pile into other vehicles and objects is worth the price of admission all by itself.

Midtown Madness could have earned a higher rating if it weren't for the game's annoying AI cops (who will only chase the player's car), its paper-thin collection of solo gameplay events, and its lack of a replay. These caveats aside, any game that can produce this

much maniacal laughter from everyone that plays it is a surefire winner in my book.

— ANDY MAHOOD has a box of Dunkin' Donuts in the back of his car that he uses to bribe cops. He now has 329 penalty points on his driver's license

GRAPHICS

If you've got the ponies under the hood, the beautiful, detailed 3D graphics are superb.

SOUND

The Caddy may sound like a Mack truck, but the other effects aren't all that bad.

DEPTH

All of the game's canned events can be completed in a couple of days.

DESIGN

Can any red-blooded North American male resist this game? Doubtful.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- A chance to drive like Elwood Blues? I'm sooo there!
- No rules! No rules! No rules!
- Multiple victory conditions

Minuses

- A bit thin in the canned events department
- No replay
- Those big, fat, doughnut-eating Chicago cops have a hard-on for you and you alone

DEVELOPER → Soar Software
PUBLISHER → Hot-B
REQUIRED → P90, 16MB RAM, 60MB
hard drive, 3X CD-ROM
IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM

Beat Down

What's da dilly wit dis punk-ass shiznit?

ACCELERATED

Dat shiz ain't needed in *Beat Down*'s isometric trippin' world of gang banging.

USUAL SUSPECTS

These are the people in your neighborhood, your neighborhood, your neighborhood — bar — hood. *Beat Down*'s cast of crazy characters include some really poorly stereotyped gangsters and urban buddies. Here are just a few...

THE DON → Should be called Pimp 'cause he's clucking' he's for da green

CAPPA → A John Woo wannabe carryin' two guns but can't take a punch

ILLINATOR → Looks like the late Hector, but has flaming 40-ouncers

SHORTY → This shotgun-shooting bitch wears overalls with one leg rolled up, but goes around shirtless

SHREDDA → The skateboarder Kylon Kid uses his spray paint and lighter as his homemade flamethrower

PIPEGUY → Looks like he's wearing women's pants and has man breasts

HOOKERS → Even video game thugs have to pay for it now and then

CHEMISTS → These guys have the best hook-up in town on the good shit, that is if you're looking for a dime-bag of HEAL X



Rat-a-tat-tat with your gat, shoot 'em all, make 'em splat. *Beat Down* consists of lots of point blank range gun fights.

"Excuse me. Can I have the attention of the class? Hi kids. Do you like violence?"

Wanna see me stick nine-inch nails through each one of my eyelids? Wanna copy *Myth* and do exactly like they did? Try Urban-Action/Strategy and get f—ked up worse than this game is? Hi... my name is ... huh? ... my name is ... what? ... my name is *Beat Down*."

[Eminem — My name is]

Okay, here's the 411. Hot-B's mission-based realtime, urban yadda, yadda, yadda game *Beat Down* follows the lead of *Gangsters* and the forthcoming *Kingpin* by tossing you into the middle of Gangland, U.S.A. However, this trip through the mean streets is about as threatening as Vanilla Ice. Keepin' it real ... boring.

Oh well, welcome to the 'hood. It's time to pay back all those bullets you've been pissed off at since they kicked your ass in seventh grade. You can now break out with your own gang of pipe-wielding bad-asses, pimps, taggers, and shotgun-carrying ho's through the 15 missions in the single player mode.

The missions' objectives are all straight from da 'hood and include such great ghetto games as "Kill the Shop-keep" and "Drug Run to the Other Side of Town." Much like other RTS games, before you can complete the objective you must first build up your forces, and to do that you must get paid. So you command your gang to rob store clerks and mug or kill pedestrians for their loot. Do this for a while



and you will rack up enough dough to reload your shooters, recruit new members, and get 'em doped up on fun new drugs like CRAZZ or NOPAIN. It seems like there's never enough cash available to do too much good though.

Patrolling cops cruise the mean streets, too. The Man is constantly trying to keep you down, so don't let them catch you breaking the law or they'll bust your ass. But don't worry, because all they do is 'cuff you for 30 seconds. Getting popped by the 5-0 is damaging only if it happens in the middle of a gang battle, because your incarcerated buddies will be unable to help you out. If all else fails, just bust a cap in the pig's ass.

Controlling your little binary bad boys couldn't get much easier. Almost all commands are by mouse click or CTRL+mouse click, including selecting members, moving around maps, exchanging money, buying "street candy" and ammo, and kicking ass. The decently-sized urban battlefields are somewhat flat and unexciting, however. Freeway overpasses, neighborhood markets, and housing make up a good portion of the scenery, and most have more than their share of urban grime.

As far as strategy, there's not a hell of a lot. Each level or mission starts you off with a different combination of street warriors, a few hand-to-hand soldiers, and if you're lucky, some gat-carrying muthas. Unfortunately you are usually grossly outnumbered. You must work your way across town to your objective, taking down the smaller packs and individuals, all the while avoiding large groups of enemies. Conserve your manpower and ammo, because both are hard to replace once you're in the thick of combat. Don't expect too much flava once the actual beat downs start — all you're really gonna get are so-so animated signature moves from every player class.

Multiplayer for two to four players can be via LAN with IPX or TCP/IP, or over the Internet. An



Haul ass to your nearest dealer

easier connection to Internet games would have been a smart addition, though. As it stands, you have to go online and then determine a host IP address.

Unless you are studying for a future in the gang-banging-related arts and can't get *Kingpin* to run on that PC that you ganked from the Compton swapmeet, don't get jumped into this geeky gang. This baby is headed straight for the PCXL Hall of Ass.

— *IF E-ROCK had one wish, it would be to have an ass big enough for all of Beat Down to kiss*

GRAPHICS

Nothing here you haven't seen before (like two or three years ago), and probably better looking than as well.

SOUND

The digi-beatbox gets really boring and annoying, and so does the woman screaming "Bitch sell crack."

DEPTH

Each mission requires a different strategy to complete it. More character upgrades would have been nice.

DESIGN

This is pretty much *Myth* with shittier graphics and so-so gameplay.

RATING

Pluses

- Pimping da ho's
- Mugging and cop killing
- Did I mention pimping da ho's?

Minuses

- Same shit, different "genre"
- Dragqueen Pipe Guy
- Bad AI and annoying pathfinding

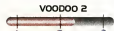
DEVELOPER → Real Sports
PUBLISHER → ASC Games
REQUIRED → P566, 16MB RAM, 70 MB hard drive, 4x CD-ROM, 4MB accelerator card
IDEAL → PII 200, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card

Jeff Gordon XS Racing

The "XS" stands for *Xtraordinarily Sucky*

ACCELE-RATED

While Direct3D-compatible, this game is optimized for 3Dfx Voodoo-based chipsets, which achieved the best frames and colored light effects. The game looked best on a Voodoo 2 card, though the Riva TNT held its own nicely.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide



Putting a passing move on Team Pepsi. Damn that ass cola.

Much like a supervillain's plot to block out the sun, a company building a game around a high-profile celebrity is something that you have to fear. ASC Games is the latest threat to gamers everywhere, having assembled every stock element conceivable for the purpose of releasing *Jeff Gordon XS Racing* onto a peaceful and unsuspecting world.

Despite the attached name and "XS" attitude, it's a woeful game — as basic and uninspired as an arcade racer could possibly be. It's important to note that it's also set in the future — there's no element of simulation, realism (other than corporate sponsorship), or any recognizable link to the sport that millions of people insist on attending.

There are only ten tracks, all of which look remarkably the same. Worse, there are only six cars from which to choose, and I was hard-pressed to tell any noticeable difference in their performance characteristics. Each car and track is named after a different corporate sponsor, shelling out to be included in the "official" Jeff Gordon computer game. As a result, the only significant difference between cars and tracks is the brand logo at which you stare while zipping around the track. Go, Team Fritos! Nice to know those fine corn chips are still around in the distant future.

The racing itself is boring. There is no discernibly useful physics model, and thus no way to



Build up speed on the straightaways for super-passes.

develop an effective racing strategy. Learning to power slide without hitting the walls is about as complex a skill as you'll need to learn. Even that isn't very important in this game, as the utter randomness of the car bumping turns each race into a demolition derby. And that might have been fun, except the cars can auto-repair (the game calls this "morphing," thus scoring five points of Street Cred), making car damage a purely cosmetic detail.

Since the tracks are also really short, the only way to get any kind of meaningful race at all is to set 20 laps or more. Short tracks aren't unforgivable — but short, boring tracks are a crime against gaming. The developers try to spice things up with super-charging speed bonuses and giant jumps that require retractable wings to navigate. It fills me with a nameless dread.

Of course, Jeff's hanging around in his ultratight vinyl racing suit, ready to offer tips on how to be a better racer. It's hilarious to watch Jeff's video driving tips when the "XS" racing has nothing at all to do with real life. Hey Champ, any tips on how to fly when my frigg'n wings are extended? It makes you wonder whether or not anyone explained to Gordon what "arcade" meant. The end result is a befuddled-looking stock car champ offering insights into flying race cars, power sliding, and self-repairing cars.

A genuinely involving rock soundtrack is wasted by the

slapped-together whooshing and clashing sounds that round out the audio, and some decent dynamic lighting is similarly wasted. Bottom line: This is an *Extremely Shitty* racer.

— **DANIEL MORRIS** *invented a game called Vroomy Kart, played with Matchbox cars on the floor. It's more fun than this game*

GRAPHICS

Some good colored lighting, but bland tracks and uninspired cars.

SOUND

Clank... whirr... whoosh! Comical sound effects, by far the weakest part of the game.

DEPTH

Only six cars and 10 tracks, and all of it pretty much the same.

DESIGN

The most basic arcade physics model imaginable, with absolutely no science to winning or losing.

RATING 3

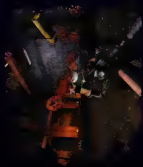
+ Pluses

- Decent visual effects
- Tips from Jeff Gordon
- Jeff Gordon in a tight black jumpsuit, if you swing that way

- Minuses

- Unimaginative car and track designs
- Laughably basic physics model
- Tiny number of tracks and cars

UNREAL™ TOURNAMENT



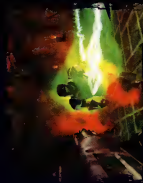
- ★ All-new and enhanced big body-count weaponry - the Redeemer, the IMPACT Hammer and more.



- ★ The most complete and challenging online multi-player experience ever.



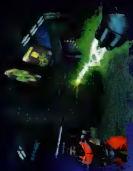
- ★ A single-player experience like no other - Guide your team to the title of Unreal Grand Master!



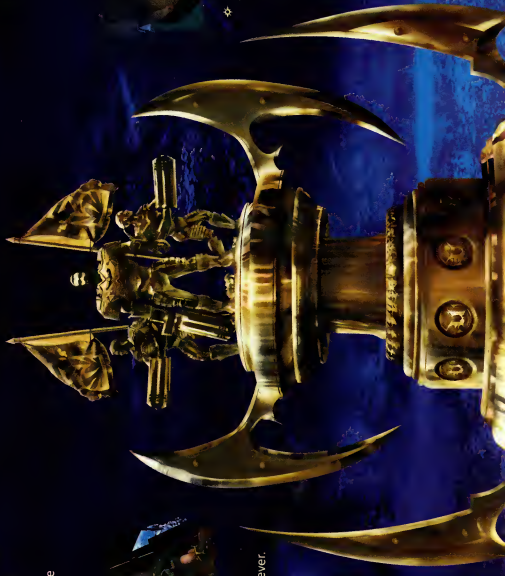
- ★ Train for combat in Novice mode. Or go Hardcore for even more intense action.



- ★ Over 30 unique environments torqued by the Unreal engine.



- ★ Completely customizable "bots" with superior A.I. - "bots" take orders and team up with you.



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MULTI-PLAYER TOURNAMENT GAME.

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WITH AND AGAINST VIRTUAL 'BOTS'.
[WITHOUT FEAR OF OBLITERATION]

LEARN THE JOY OF MULTI-PLAYER
MAYHEM WITH VOICE TUTORIALS.

GET ONLINE AND FRAG ON THE
SERVER OF YOUR CHOICE WITH
A COUPLE OF CLICKS.

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TO ANYONE WHO EVER
TOOK A MAN DOWN IN A 3D SHOOTER.
AND LIKED IT.

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.
TO PROVE THAT YOU ARE THE BEST OF THE BEST.
THIS IS THE GLADIATORIAL ARENA OF THE FUTURE.

THIS IS A SINGLE-PLAYER TRIAL BY FIRE.
A HEAVYWEIGHT DEATHMATCH
CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE UNIVERSE.

FOR THOSE WILLING TO BUILD A MOUNTAIN OF BODIES.
AND CLIMB TO THE TOP.

IN ENVIRONMENTS THAT STUN.

AGAINST A.I. THAT KILLS.

FOR THOSE WILLING TO STAKE THEIR LIVES
IN THE PURSUIT OF VICTORY...
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Our National Pastime

Although last year's Mark McGwire mania provided a brief glimpse of what it would be like if baseball was still relevant, we all know football and basketball are the only sports competing for the coveted title of National Pastime.

BASKETBALL

THE CASE FOR → It's fast. Except that seasons seem to last longer than a very special episode of "Moesha."

You can play almost anywhere. What other American sport allows drunken slob and their slovenly buddies to pick up a ball, find a nearby hoop, and begin playing?

Cheerleaders. Other sports have cheerleaders, but no other allows you to see them in such skimpy outfits in such close proximity.

THE CASE AGAINST → Spike Lee. We realize Spike bashing is overdone, but as a basketball fans go he is — without a doubt — history's greatest monster.

The Regular Season. What else starts in October, ends in late June, and seems to drag on longer than a Julia Roberts/Richard Gere romantic comedy?

Latrell Sprewell. We're okay with the fact that he's doing well in New York, but it's hard to forgive a guy who chokes his boss, then sues the league for "punishing" him.

THE MOVIES → *Fast Break*. Gabe Kaplan and a girl who pretends to be a boy so she can play on the team. A 1970's classic.

Hoosiers. What's there to do in Indiana other than play basketball?

Blue Chips. The movie that answered the eternal question: Can Shaq act? No!

The Fish that Saved Pittsburgh. Easily the greatest basketball movie ever. Almost single-handedly ruined any chances Pittsburgh ever had of getting a pro hoops team.

FOOTBALL

THE CASE FOR → Extreme Violence. No other sport, except perhaps Extreme Fighting, has the unbridled violence and mayhem Americans crave so badly.

Sundays, Sundays, Sundays. It's an excuse to miss church, blow off relatives, and ignore your significant other — a stroke of pure, unadulterated genius.

The Fans. Where else can you see fat guys paint their disgusting bodies, drink a 12-pack of beer, and yell obscenities for hours, other than at a *Star Trek* convention?

THE CASE AGAINST → Play Stoppage. Europeans are right — there's too much starting and stopping in a football game.

Annoying Announcers. There are a few who don't grate our ears, but John Madden is beginning to work our last nerve. Please, no more stories about snout and mud!

Crazy Owners. Jerry Jones of the Cowboys, Michael McCaskey of the Bears, Wayne

Huzienga of the Dolphins. How did football attract such a motley group of oddballs, all equal in their ability to screw up their teams and attract the hatred of their cities?

THE MOVIES → *North Dallas Forty*. Nick Nolte and Mac Davis star in a fictional account of the "North Dallas Bulls," a team of malcontents, misfits and druggies. Obviously fiction — what real-life team could it be based on?

Little Glants. As funny and original as *Police Academy XII: We Can't Stop This Series*.

The Waterboy. Adam Sandler stretches his acting abilities. It's funny because he hits stuff.

The Longest Yard. Possibly the best football flick ever, with a pre-lame Burt Reynolds. A good family movie, if your family is serving 10 years to life.

CONCLUSION

After careful consideration, weighing of checks and balances, and a consultation with drug-addicted "One Day at a Time" star McKenzie Phillips, our selection process has determined the true National Pastime ... and it is:

Soccer. Arguing for either football or basketball is going to be too much work, especially after all this comparing and contrasting. We're sleepy, and soccer is the perfect sporting Ny-Tol. Don't forget to wake us when somebody scores — in an hour or two.



THE STANDINGS

One good thing — at least the Orioles aren't in last in these standings.

	GAME TITLE	W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	2	0
	NBA Live 98	1	1
	NBA Action	0	2
FOOTBALL	NCAA 99	2	0
	GameDay 99	1	1
	Madden 99	0	2
GOLF	Links LS 99	4	0
	Tiger Woods 99	3	1
	Golden Tee Golf	2	2
	Pro 18 World Tour	1	3
HOCKEY	Fox Sports Golf 99	0	4
	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	1
BASEBALL	Powerplay 98	0	2
	High Heat 2k	4	0
	Triple Play 2k	3	1
	Microsoft Baseball 2k	2	2
	Hardball 6: 2K Edition	1	3
SOCCER	Baseball 2K Edition (VR)	0	4
	FIFA 99	2	0
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	1	1
	Sensible Soccer 98	0	2



Madden NFL 2000

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

WHAT HAS CHANGED → Redesigned player models better reflect the varying man sizes on field, and they also affect the hits and tackling ability. Hot and cold streaks put players over the top (or in your dog house), while new "route-based passing" follows suit with other football games, letting you lead or underthrow a receiver to avoid safeties and corners.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → EA's flashy front-end and menu systems, which are almost always the best in the business.

NEW FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → The situation creator, which allows players to put themselves at the helm of a 99-yard, game-deciding two-minute drill, or to jump smack in the middle of historical situations and change history. Our choice: Patriots over Bears in last-second rally at Super Bowl XX, 47-46!



Player sizes now affect collisions. Snake this, Jake.



POTENTIAL FUMBLES → Too much pile-on with too little engine tweaking. EA Sports sometimes adds layers of new features without considering the effects on slower systems. We don't want an NFL slideshow on a 450MHz, just for the sake of a new sideline button-slapping animation.

RETIRED HALL OF FAME QUARTERBACK JOHN ELWAY SAYS → "Madden NFL 2000 looks to be the front-runner for sucking up my newly-found free time. That, and having Denver-area orphans scrub my enormous teeth."



Madden 2000 varies the bulk and breadth of its players, so lumpy lineman like this will hardly ever catch streaking wide receivers.

NFL Fever 2000

DEVELOPER → Microsoft
PUBLISHER → Microsoft

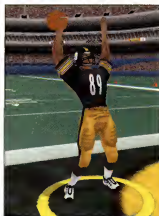
WHAT HAS CHANGED → Everything, as this is the Big M's first try at football for the masses. Microsoft is hawking this as an action-slanted title, including new moves like shoulder charges, dives, and pump fakes on offense, as well as swim moves and intentional face masks on defense. The game also offers "real NFL-style play books," with NFL players modeled specifically for each team and its real-life playing style.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → Though this is Microsoft's first foray into PC football, its early features list needs a boost if the game is to steal yardage from Madden. Most of the items it touts as "special" (such as realistic sound effects), may not make the grade against an established brand.

NEW FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → Internet updates throughout the season, which will let players run-



Playbooks in Fever 2000 were modeled after each real team.



Fever even lets Steelers celebrate TDs, unlike in real life.

ning a season keep their roster current every week.

POTENTIAL FUMBLES → Most of what we've seen of the game and its early description doesn't offer anything the rest of the pack didn't have two years ago. Though it stands the advantage of being the only other slim-style PC football game coming, it may be hard-pressed going up against Madden.

DALLAS COWBOYS QUARTERBACK TROY AIKMAN SAYS → "Microsoft's NFL Fever 2000 is a lot like my team. Two years ago, both would have been formidable opponents ready for action, but this year, both are potential mixed bags. They also both offer fans a coupon for \$10 off any Dallas hooker (limit one coupon per customer per visit)."



Fever seems to have the look, but will gameplay follow?

NBA Live 2000

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

WHAT HAS CHANGED → Expanded player facial expressions now make the game look even more realistic, with players even shouting after big plays. There's also a new one-on-one pick-up that will let gamers battle player against player in a play-ground mode, as well as new transition animations like knuckle-bumping after free throws, high-fives, big plays, and dunks.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → NBA Live has always been at the top of the hoops heap in terms of polish, statistical and season-simulation meat, and action. An early look indicated the game's strong points won't be any different this time around.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → Enhanced artificial intelligence (AI) that could actually capture the increasingly one-on-one nature of NBA hoops. EA claims



One-on-one can pit current players against All-Timers.



Enhanced player models show off the NBA Live engine.



New faces mean you can tell how ugly Reggie really is.

computer-controlled players will react realistically to pick-and-rolls, match-ups, post-ups, and screens, even spotting up for the open three if your man is double teamed — valuable additions if the gameplay actually lives up to these promises.

POTENTIAL BRICKS → Too much NBA Jam-style running and dunking, and not enough defense to make it seem like a real game. EA has been on the action-oriented bandwagon lately, and it would be a shame to see the best basketball game on the planet disintegrate into NBA Slam, Jam, and Glam 2000.

TONI KUKOC, CHICAGO BULLS FORWARD, SAYS → "It would take a disaster of Bill Buckner proportions to topple the king from its throne. I can't believe either EA Sports or Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf would ever try to fix what ain't broke."



NBA Inside Drive 2000

DEVELOPER → Microsoft
PUBLISHER → Microsoft

WHAT HAS CHANGED → Look for a more action-oriented focus from Microsoft's basketball offering this year, with improvements to post play, as well as new fakes and defensive moves motion-captured from Ray Allen.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → Team-specific play books still let gamers pick the team they believe suits them best on the court, while the game's front end, menus and simulation modes figure to be about the same — a not-so-distant second to NBA Live.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → The game's focus on post play may be its saving grace, especially if it can pull off the as-yet-unconquered task of replicating a man-on-man duel down on the blocks. Good post duels seem to be the last frontier in PC hoops games, so capturing the flavor of these all-important battles could give



Team-specific playbooks let you choose the playing style.



Here we see the Lakers all guarding their men in Inside Drive 2000. Realism just left the building.



Microsoft's game at least one leg up on its stiff competition.

POTENTIAL BRICKS → Again, going up against a market juggernaut can turn even a modestly good game into a sales miss. Early features lists don't show anything that will make Inside Drive stand out. And a motion-captured Ray Allen looks great on say... Ray Allen, but when Will Perdue starts moving like Ray Allen, the suspension of disbelief is out the window.

UTAH JAZZ CENTER ADAM KEEFE SAYS → "Like Inside Drive, I'd like to think I'm more than just a scrub. I've got skills that let me compete against the big boys. Besides, who does Karl Malone turn to when he's out of towels?"



Fox Sports Pro Basketball 2000

DEVELOPER → Radical Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive

WHAT HAS CHANGED → New to the PC basketball world, Fox Interactive is promising a game with "Fox Sports Attitude," which could mean everything from brassy horn intro music, to long-winded Madden stories about the center's flatulence. Though the company is keeping most details close to its chest, gamers can also expect the ability to create, edit, and trade players between the teams, as well as to support up to eight players at once in a single game.

WHAT'S STAYED THE SAME → Even at this early stage, the game's graphics are encouraging, if not awe-inspiring. Expect Fox to shoot for the fun and action-oriented angle, as it looks to carve its own niche in the competitive PC hoops court.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → Eight players at once in a single game is a nice touch, as are the sights and sounds of Fox broadcasts being included in the game, which could attract gamers and casual sports fans alike to the game. We'll no doubt end up humming their theme song and swearing eternal loyalty to Satan/media mogul/Fox chieftain Rupert Murdoch.



Early looks at Fox's game seem promising, but also show the long road Fox must travel to catch perennial top dog, *NBA Live*.

POTENTIAL BRICKS → Any first-timer in the market must watch for loads of potential pitfalls, and Fox Interactive is no exception. Judging from the past, most company's first efforts in the sports arena are usually tepid at best, and if Fox Interactive tries to "out-live" *NBA Live*, it may regret the decision.

GOLDEN STATE FORWARD
ANTAWN JAMISON SAYS → "I'm just an up-and-coming rookie on a mediocre team, but don't count me out completely. John Madden is putting me through his summer workout routine, which includes swallowing Low-Fat Twinkies whole and bench pressing Emmanuel Lewis."



Fox touches will be nice, but most fans are more accustomed to Fox-branded football — will the additions work for hoops fans?

Faking It - An Exposé

Imagine PCBL's surprise when we looked at *NBA Live 2000* screenshots, only to find that they'd been manipulated in a quest to uncover other conspiracies, we've procured more doctored photos, so you, dear reader, will know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to help us 2004, or ... um ... God

NBA LIVE 2000
Memo to EA Sports: Just because you've had the best basketball game, the last few years doesn't give you the right to slip us a mickey. Is development of *NBA Live 2000* going so badly that you had to Photoshopped screenshots together?

SASQUATCH
Often touted as proof that Big Foot exists, this photo of the local monkey man playing for the Suns is clearly a fake. In: close study of the picture, reveal the monster to be nothing more than George, a fan before his morning shave.

JORDAN KNOWS
Though he claims ignorance about the stars who make him, this photo of Michael Jordan running an Indonesian child farm proves otherwise. Photo-graphic experts have been unable to prove this a fake, though, this same episode did prove Jordan's own camp at several undertakes.
Arby's workers

MICHAEL IRVIN
In 1994, Cowboys wide receiver Michael Irvin lived resurrecting his image with a series of laughably fake publicity photos. This one shows Irvin at an orphanage visiting sick children. The cocaine he's handing out-eyed Times O'Connor, & ... gives away the futility.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA
When we received this photo, it had been Photoshopped to show Anna holding an issue of PCBL and a driver's license. We got all that other junk out of the way so we could get a look at her breasts.



SEPARATING THE SHIT FROM THE GEMS

PCXL heads out into the wilds of the Internet to dig up the dirt on the best user-created Mods and TC's

Once upon a time, gamers shelled out 50 clams for a shiny new game, played through the single player, perhaps tried out multiplayer, and then sat around wishing there was something more they could do with the damn thing. Now, amateur code-jockeys have been presented with level editors and source codes, and can fiddle around with the guts to extend the life of their favorite games. The results can be as simple as new single and multiplayer levels, or as extravagant as mods and TC's (total conversions), where a good chunk of the original game has been rewritten or replaced.

Unfortunately, as with all things in life, there is a lot of crap floating amongst the gems, and that's why we've pulled on the shit-waders and ventured out to find the best mods and TC's available. And to make your life that much easier, you lazy bum, we've included most of them on our second disc, along with the latest shareware version of GameSpy. How's that for service?

CLASSIC QUAKE MODS

While folks have always hacked away at their games, *Quake* forever changed the gaming landscape in terms of user-created mods and levels. Armchair coders tore into *Quake* like wildfire, taking the game in directions that Id Software could never have envisioned. Here are two mods that helped set the standard, and reason enough for you to reinstall the classic if — say it ain't so — it's actually not on your machine already (you oughta be ashamed):

GAME: *Quake*
MOD/TC TITLE: Team Fortress
CREATED BY: Team Fortress Software
CONTACT INFO: robin@valvesoftware.com
GAME TYPE: Squad-based multiplayer
WEBSITE: <http://www.planetfortress.com/teamfortress/> and <http://www.teamfortress.com>
WHAT IS IT? The granddaddy of all mods, this is squad-based multiplayer combat and the basis of Valve Software's upcoming *Team Fortress 2*.
WHY IT'S A CLASSIC: The squad-based multiplayer craze has its roots in Team Fortress — and with good reason. Team Fortress took the standard deathmatch principle

and flipped it on its head, by adding different classes for gamers to play. Suddenly it was just as important to support behind the front lines as it was to attack the enemy's base. Couple that with the different game types (Capture the Flag, Capture and Hold) and you've got a big-time mod. To say Team Fortress is fun is a huge understatement — it kicks serious ass. And if that doesn't convince you, try this on for size: Valve Software bought the whole company just so they could make a game out of it.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Just run the *tf2inst.exe* and then use GameSpy to look for servers. There are plenty of Team Fortress servers out there, but most use *QuakeWorld*, which is located on the disc at *Quake/Quakeworld*. Use the Team Fortress GameSpy tab to help you find servers.
FILE: *tf2inst.exe*



PainKeep = cool deathmatch.

GAME: *Quake*
MOD/TC TITLE: PainKeep
CREATED BY: Team Evolve
CONTACT INFO: evolve@mail@teamevolve.com
SP or MP: Deathmatch
WEBSITE: <http://www.teamevolve.com>
WHAT IS IT? One of the best deathmatch mods for *Quake*, PainKeep features new weapons and levels, as well as some of the most addictive gameplay you'll ever see.
WHY IT'S A CLASSIC: PainKeep

ONES TO WATCH

Some really cool mods and TC's have been announced for *Half-Life*; unfortunately, none of them were complete when we went to press. Here's a quick rundown of some of those with real potential.

TITLE → *Die Hard*
WEB SITE → <http://www.hallife.net/diehard/>
WHAT IS IT? One hard as a TC planned to completely recreate the movie *Die Hard*. Who wouldn't want to kick ass as John McClane?

TITLE → *Russian Front*
WEB SITE → <http://www.planethallife.com/borderline/mods/rfront/>
WHAT IS IT? Set during World War II, Russian Front lets players battle it out as either German or Russian soldiers, and offers different classes from which to choose. Russian Front is nearing completion, so you'll want to check the above website for updated information.

TITLE → *Counter Strike*
WEB SITE → <http://www.planethallife.com/counterstrike/>
WHAT IS IT? Similar to Team Fortress, Counter Strike is a team-based multiplayer mod, where players can fight it out as either a terrorist or a member of a counter-terrorist force. It will feature numerous real-world weapons and several different character classes.

TITLE → *Action Half-Life*
WEB SITE → <http://ahl.tele.fr/evolve.com/>
WHAT IS IT? Action Half-Life (from the same team that brought us Action Quake II) is currently in development and looks to be shaping up nicely.

TITLE → *Ransom*
WEB SITE → <http://www.planethallife.com/ransom/>
WHAT IS IT? Ransom is a TC that casts players as members of an elite police squad or as terrorists. Game types will include rescue, the hostage, defuse the bomb, and hitman.



Check Hall of Fame's profile with no bad forum threads.

Team Fortress is where it all started. Just take a look at the size of that gun!



took the weapons of *Quake* to the next level by adding goodies like bear traps and pork-and-beans (a health bonus that gives you a bad case of gas — each time you fart, you're flung into the air at a random angle). It also added the gravity well, a shotgun that fires explosive rounds, and the Air Fist, which can be used to deflect incoming rockets (or squish an enemy against a wall). The result is some of the most insane and bloody deathmatch the world has ever seen. Very cool.

PainKeep's level design was excellent as well. Employing a voting system whereby players run through portals to choose the next map, the levels' environments vary a great deal, from ancient Egypt, to torture chambers, to dark and musty castles. The good folks at Team Evolve even added new sounds, enhancing the overall atmosphere of each level. Unfortunately, PainKeep servers can be hard to find these days, but it's well worth your time to search them out.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Create a PainKeep directory inside the *Quake* directory (c:\Quake\painkeep) and unzip all the files into that directory. On your desktop, click Start, and then

Run, and type:
c:\Quake\Quake.exe -game painkeep +map start. If you want to play on GameSpy, you'll want to install *QuakeWorld* — the file is located on the disc in the \Quake\Quakeworld directory. Use the PainKeep GameSpy tab to help you find servers.

FILE: Pk111nwn.zip

ALSO ON THE DISC: Thunder-walker CTF and Threewave CTF

QUAKE II MODS

Quake II is second only to the original *Quake* in terms of the sheer number of mods available. So how do the mods of *Quake II* stack up against the classics? Let's take a look at some of the better ones:

GAME: *Quake II*

MOD/TC TITLE: Action Quake II

CREATED BY: The A-Team

CONTACT INFO: ateam@tele-fragg.com

SP OR MP: Teamplay and Deathmatch

WEBSITE: <http://action.tele-fragg.com/>

WHAT IS IT? Action Quake II turns *Quake II* into a *Rainbow Six*-style game where one shot can kill you, and strategy and stealth can mean the difference between success and failure.

IS IT ANY GOOD? Action Quake II is one of the most popular mods for *Quake II*. Why? Because it's a shitload of fun to play. All of



Sitting in jail sure does suck. Damn, there went the soap!

Quake II's fantasy weapons have been replaced with real world options like sniper rifles and pistols, and the emphasis has shifted from knee-jerk twitch reactions to the ability to aim steadily and snipe someone all the way across the map. Like *Rainbow Six*, players have to reload their guns and monitor their ammo supply.

Action Quake II also features two modes of play — team-based and individual deathmatch. The team-based mode is built around the idea that once you're dead, you're out of the game until the next round, forcing players to be sneaky. Individual deathmatch is about what you'd expect, except for the inclusion of real world weapons. And, you're forced to contend with the same ammo limitations, etc. again.

The only down side to Action Quake II is that there are a lot of maps out there — if you connect to a server, there's a good chance you'll have to download new maps and sounds, which can take a while over a modem.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Simply run the *actn2Ccl.exe*, extracting the files into your *Quake II* directory. There are a lot of Action Quake II servers out there, just use the GameSpy Action Quake II tab to find them. **FILES:** *actn2Ccl.exe* (mod files) and *vwpfix.exe* (bug fix)

GAME: *Quake II*

MOD/TC TITLE: Jailbreak

CREATED BY: Dave Wallin and

Team Reaction

CONTACT INFO: dwallin@plan-etQuake.com

SP OR MP: Team-based Deathmatch

WEBSITE: <http://www.plan-etQuake.com/rxn/jail/main.shtml>

WHAT IS IT? Jailbreak is a team-based deathmatch mod where players who are killed are sent to jail, where they sit until they are either freed by their teammates, escape on their own, or everyone on their team is "executed."

IS IT ANY GOOD? Jailbreak quickly became one of the more popular mods for *Quake II* simply because it was such a cool idea. Teams can free their imprisoned teammates via a release button inside the enemy's base. If an entire team is killed, they are "executed" and the other team is rewarded with a huge number of frags.

The result is incredibly strategic gameplay, as teams are forced to balance the defense of their base with missions to free their imprisoned comrades. Jailbreak is also unique in that it features player-controlled defensive turrets, which fire rockets and grenades.

Jailbreak has been dogged by one problem since its inception — it sucks sitting in jail and talk of "special" prison time-killing mods are just scary. Team Reaction fiddled with the game's settings, making it possible for players to automatically be freed after a set amount of time (three minutes or so) if their team failed to get them out, but it's proven difficult to balance how long imprisonment should last. Thankfully, this problem isn't a mod-killer, because most of the jails are equipped with an escape tunnel. So, if you don't want to sit in jail, don't get killed.



Tata, Mofol Action Quake II lets you get it done John Woo-style.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Simply extract the jailbreak files into your *Quake 2* directory (c:\Quake2). There are plenty of jailbreak servers; use the GameSpy jailbreak tab to find them.

FILES: jbzocl.zip (mod files) and jbgOLD.zip

GAME: *Quake II*

MOD/TC TITLE: Q-Pong

CREATED BY: Dave Wallin and Team Reaction

CONTACT INFO: dwallin@planetquake.com

SP OR MP: Team-based Deathmatch

WEBSITE: <http://www.planetquake.com/rxn/qpong/index.shtml>

WHAT IS IT? Q-Pong is played by two to four teams, each with a goal. A giant metal ball (or two or three) is dropped into the arena and players move the ball by shooting it. If a team gets the ball into an opposing team's goal, they take away a point from that team's score — when their score reaches zero, that team is eliminated.

IS IT ANY GOOD?

Q-Pong was the grand prize winner of *PC Gamer's* (our sister mag — our weak redheaded stepsister, but our sister nonetheless) *Quake II* Mod Contest, and is a helluva good time. Being able to smash opponents into little gibs with a giant ball is far more exciting than just shooting them. Large matches are the best, as players can take out huge numbers of people with a carefully aimed ball. The best



Now this is a real man's flight sim! Just rockets and more rockets.

part of Q-Pong, though, is its sheer unpredictability — no two matches are ever the same — and that's what keeps people coming back for more.

On the down side, lower-end systems can take a performance hit, especially when there are tons of players and balls flying around. Also, Team Reaction doesn't seem overly interested in updating the mod, or adding new features, so what you see is what you get. To help ease that crisis, we've included some extra maps.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Simply extract qpong1.zip into the hard drive you have *Quake II* installed on (c:\) — it will automatically fill in the correct directory structure. There are

a few Q-Pong servers up and running; use the GameSpy Q-Pong tab to find them.

FILES: qpong1.zip (mod files), qppack1.zip (maps), qppack2.zip (maps), qppack3.zip (maps)

GAME: *Quake II*

MOD/TC TITLE: AirQuake II

CREATED BY: QUARRD Team

CONTACT INFO: bjoern@con-verted2.com

SP OR MP: Deathmatch and Team-based Deathmatch

WEBSITE: <http://airquake2.converted2.com/>

WHAT IS IT? Believe it or not, AirQuake II is an air and ground combat mod for *Quake II*. Players command jets, helicopters, and ground-based vehicles like tanks.

IS IT ANY GOOD? Okay, the idea does sound a little hokey, but AirQuake II (a continuation of AirQuake for the original *Quake*) is actually a good deal of fun. Sure

you're flying around in a jet or helicopter, but you're never bogged down with any of that flight sim crap — it's still pretty much shoot and kill. With a bunch of players the game quickly turns into a bloodbath — albeit a bizarre aeronautical one. And if you're a loser and can't convince anyone to play with you, the game will let you square off against computer-controlled drones.

The only downside is the control scheme. The ground-based units are easy to use, but the jets and helicopter can be difficult to control. Also, since the maps feature wide open spaces, lower-end systems take a significant performance hit, and it's hard to find a server to play on. That said, AirQuake II provides a unique twist on traditional deathmatch.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION

INSTRUCTIONS: In order to play AirQuake II, you'll need to install two files — airq2_o85.exe and airq2_pak.exe; simply point both toward your *Quake II* directory, and they'll do the rest. To start a game, go to your desktop, click Start, then Run, and type:

\\quake2\\quake2.exe +set game airq2 +map sandman. There are other maps available; be sure to read the manual that is included with the game for their names.

FILES: airq2_o85.exe (mod files) and airq2_pak.exe (maps)

ALSO ON THE DISC: Nighthunter (multiplayer); Wanted: The *Quake II* Western Pack (single-player TC demo); Dawn of Darkness (single-player TC demo)



Despite its overt symbolism, Q-Pong is still a friggin' blast.



Look, it's another shot of Air Quake III!

REALTIME STRATEGY MODS

First-person shooters aren't the only games to enjoy the mod and TC treatment — realtime strategy enthusiasts are doing some cool stuff in their neck of the woods as well. Here are two of the best:

GAME: *StarCraft*

MOD/TC TITLE: The Antioch Chronicles

CREATED BY: Ruben Moreno
CONTACT INFO: auspex@tech-base.com

SP OR MP: Single-player Campaign
WEBSITE: <http://antioch.tech-base.com>

WHAT IS IT? The Antioch Chronicles is a new eight mission single-player campaign for *StarCraft*. It features a new story, new characters, and new sounds.

IS IT ANY GOOD?

It's widely hailed as one of the best user-created *StarCraft* campaigns; so popular, in fact, that a sequel is in the works. The story fits into standard *StarCraft* continuity (set after the first game, but before *Brood Wars*), and the map designs and triggers are first rate. Unlike a lot of amateur *StarCraft* campaigns out there, Ruben actually took the time to create new characters, complete with new art and dialog. In addition, The Anti-



Antioch's final campaign will have you begging for your mommy.

och Chronicles features some really cool in-game scripted sequences, and the final battles really give you a sense of how large the conflict is, as you control multiple teams at once.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS:

In order to play Antioch Chronicles, you must have *StarCraft* version 1.04 or higher. The campaign consists of five zip files — go into your *StarCraft* maps directory (c:\program files\StarCraft\maps) and create a new directory called Antioch. Extract all five zip files into this directory. (c:\program files\StarCraft\maps\Antioch). Start *StarCraft*, select Single-player, then click on Custom Game. A box will appear that lists all files and sub-directories within the maps directory. Click the Antioch directory and select Antioch 1-01.scm. Select Use Map Settings, and then click Start.

FILES: A1v104-1.zip, A1v104-2.zip, A1v104-3.zip, A1v104-4.zip, A1v104-5.zip



GAME: *Myth II*
MOD/TC TITLE: WWII: Recon
CREATED BY: Craig Goodman
CONTACT INFO:

SantasHead@yahoo.com
SP OR MP: Multiplayer over Bungie.net

WEBSITE:
<http://www.clanplaid.net/misc/recon/index.html>

WHAT IS IT? WWII: Recon transforms the fantasy-based units of *Myth II* into WWII soldiers. It supports all of the different *Myth II* multiplayer games, such as Last Man Standing, King of the Hill, etc.

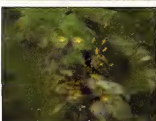
IS IT ANY GOOD?
WWII: Recon is so damn cool that Bungie actually created an official press release about it — yes, it kicks that much ass. WWII soldiers, complete with new sounds

and weapons, have replaced all of *Myth II*'s units and the result is one of the best multiplayer games around. The soldiers can fire their rifles, bayonet the enemy, and shoot long-range explosive shells. There are power-ups scattered across each map, which will rear your fighting boys with more ammunition and offer them health packs so they can heal themselves (and their teammates). And let's not forget the excessive gore *Myth II* is known for.

SPECIAL INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS:

Just unzip the files into your *Myth II* plugins directory (c:\program files\MythII\plugins), start the game, select Multiplayer, and log onto Bungie.net.

FILE: WWII_Recon(SH)v1_0.zip



Nothing tears your balls out faster than war. Do your thing, soldier! Go!



The scripted scenes provide a nice segue to tons of destruction.

HOW MODS AND MAPS WORK

Everyone loves trying out new levels and mods, but sometimes getting them to work can be a major pain in the ass. Keeping that in mind, we've whipped up this short tutorial designed to help you install and play all those cool levels.

Please note: All instructions assume you have installed the game to the default directory on the C: drive; if you have installed the game elsewhere, be sure to change the drive letter and path.

QUAKE/QUAKE II

BSP Files

A BSP file is a basic *Quake/Quake II* map file; the vast majority of levels produced are BSP files.

Quake

Unzip the file into c:\quake\ids\maps

Start the game as normal. Press the tilde (~) key to bring down the console. Type map X, replacing the X with the name of the map. So, if the name of the map is PCXL.bsp, you would type: map PCXL. You do not have to type the .bsp extension.

Quake II

Unzip the file into the c:\quake2\baseq2\map directory.

Start the game as normal. Press the tilde (~) key to bring down the console. Type map X, replacing the X with the name of the map. So, if the name of the map is PCXL.bsp, you would type: map PCXL. Do not type the .bsp extension.

PAK Files

Since PAK files often contain new sounds and art, they must be given their own directory within the game's file system. Most mods are made up of PAK files.

The first thing to do when installing a PAK file is to open the README.TXT and see what directory name the author has assigned it.

This is extremely important! If you name the directory incorrectly, the file will not run.

For the purposes of this tutorial, we'll assume the directory needs to be \BOOTY.



Quake

Create a directory called BOOTY inside the *Quake* directory. (c:\quake\booty)

Unzip all files into this directory. On your desktop, click Start and then Run.

Type c:\quake\quake.exe -game booty +map booty01
Hit Enter.

Quake II

Create a directory called BOOTY inside the *Quake II* directory. (c:\quake2\booty)

Unzip all the files into this directory.

On your desktop, click Start and then Run.

Type c:\quake2\quake2.exe +set game booty +map booty01.
Hit Enter.

If you get an error message (in either *Quake* or *Quake II*) that says "cannot load BOOTY01.BSP", it is because you screwed up the placement of the directory or typed the name wrong in the command line. Check your work and then hang your head in shame for being such a friggin' idiot.

UNREAL

Unreal levels are by far the easiest to get up and running. Once you install *Unreal*, the program will automatically associate all .UNR files with the game; all levels end with the .UNR extension. To start a new *Unreal* level, all you have to do is double-click the .UNR file.

If, for some unknown reason, that doesn't work, unzip the file into c:\unreal\maps. Start the game, press the tilde key (~) to bring down the console, and type Open Mapname, where Mapname is the name of the .UNR file.

STARCRAFT

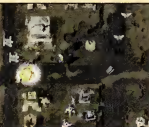
First of all, check out the *StarCraft* directory; if there isn't already a directory called MAPS (c:\program

files\StarCraft\maps) — create one. Unzip all the files into the MAPS directory.

Once you've extracted the files, start the game as you normally would, choose single player game, and then select Play Custom. You will then see a list of all the map files in the \maps directory.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

If the maps are in UFO format, unzip them into the c:\cavedog\totala directory. If the maps are in TNT/OTA format, create a MAPS folder in your TOTALA directory (c:\cavedog\totala\maps) and unzip the TNT and OTA files into the MAPS folder.



MYTH II

To get to the gaming eroticism that is *Myth II*, simply unzip the files into your *Myth II* plugins directory (c:\program files\MythII\plugins) and start the game. You'll need to log onto Bungie.net to play — once you're logged on, you can either join a game that is running the mod you've installed, or you can start your own game. (If you choose the latter, the mod will appear in the available games.)



ARE YOU DARK ENOUGH?

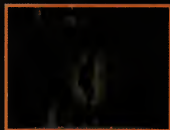
DARK\$TONE: SHADOW VENGEANCE MASTER: REVENGE OF THE DARK SHADOWSTONE'S DARK STONE SHADOW 2: THE DARKENING

"A new paradigm in darkness"
— Next Generation

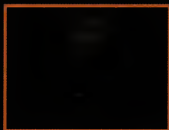
"Darker than Dark Side of the
Moon - and better too"
— PC Gamer

"When we can actually
physically see this game,
we'll let you know"
— PC Accelerator

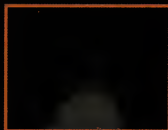
Darkness Falls Fall '99



Masterful blends of the art, darkness,
technique, and player's sensory
Side angles



Slumber, quickly through 35 inched by
"darkness" has amazingly blend out-
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Fight dozens of dark enemies with
weapons like the Scythe of Darkness and
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ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

WE LOVE TO BITE AND CLAW, AND IT SHOWS

When Fox Interactive said they were foregoing the ability to save during a mission in *Aliens versus Predator*, we thought they were insane. We've since amended that sentiment and think they were just being sadistic. With that in mind, we've spent hour after hour with the game, then harassed the developers for a few more hours to bring together some pearls of wisdom to help you out. Who loves ya, baby?

General Tips

LISTEN → If you hear the scampering of a face hugger, move back and look closely in the direction of the sound. They'll scuttle around noisily and stop just before they jump at you. If you can't see one but hear it stop scuttling ... **MOVE!** Your face is next.

DEFEAT XENOBORGs → Multiple SADAR blasts might kill one, but the surest way to stop it is to turn it off. There's a green

flashing button on its head — hit that and the Xenoborg shuts down. This is easiest with the Predator's zooming and sniping ability, but a Marine firing wildly at its head might get lucky. Still, your best bet is just to run past them without firing a shot.

BODY-SPECIFIC DAMAGE

→ For humans and Predators fighting Aliens, head shots are always preferable since it results in far less acid spew, but it's extremely easy to end up blowing an Alien to bits, even by accident.

Aliens can do a head bite,

but only when they've lowered the Predator's health to a point where the jaw attack will kill it.

ARMOR STRENGTH → To work out damage endurance, use this rough guide: If an AI Marine is 100%, an Alien is about 150% and a Predator about 500%.

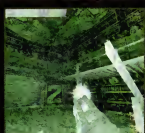
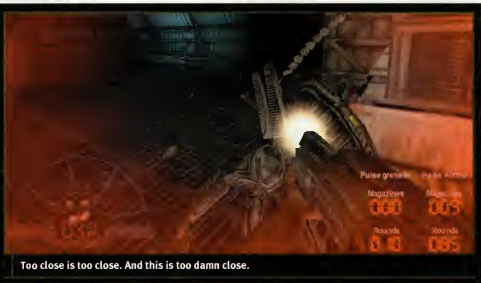
FLASHBACK → Very useful. Use it to toggle between favorite weapons, or when playing the Predator, for swapping back to Wristblades to claim a trophy.

You'll have a few seconds to switch his lights off before the whole level explodes.

AI and Random Activities

Civilians with Molotov cocktails are especially entertaining since they often end up killing themselves and anyone around them. When Marines are terrified, they begin firing wildly, so don't taunt!

Predator AI centers around chasing you, knowing when to cloak, and using the right weapons. Xenomorph senses enable them to track you down just by following a trail of scents. Behavior is pretty much seek and destroy, but they will try to find path routes to get to you. Though you'll often see several at once, Aliens don't coordinate attacks as a group.



KILLING BLOW

→ When a Predator kneels down injured, kill him quickly (he's setting his death bomb to blow).



This could lead to the perfect spear gun alien impaling. Pin the bastard to the wall.



Xenoborgs should be avoided rather than confronted. Conserve ammo whenever possible.

The Predator

FIGHTING THE QUEEN



The Predator must fight the Queen in her cavernous lair armed with only the Spear Gun and wrist blades. On the medium and high difficulty level, you'll also have face huggers to contend with (or, more to the point, avoid, since ammo is so limited). Avoid the Queen's projectiles, never get close to her, and shoot her with spears. Stay in the Electrical mode at all times and pick your shots exceedingly carefully, since missing can be deadly.

From the outset, the Predator seems like he would be pretty similar to the Marine in terms of how you play him, but in actuality the Alien hunter is very different. The Colonial Marine's weaponry is more powerful, and the Predator's hunter attack style means that its equipment is geared to this highly specialized offensive method.

Predators are faster than humans, but not as fast as Aliens. They can fall great distances without injury, are much more resistant to acid blood than humans, and just generally tough as hell (about five times more resistant to damage than the Marine). Predators are dependent upon their Field Charge energy supply for most of their weapons, cloaking ability, and healing syringe. Thankfully, both their health and energy regenerate automatically (though very slowly).

Hunting Aliens and humans requires different tools. The auto-targeting weapons (the Plasmacaster and Disc) will lock onto a target only if you are in the right vision mode. Bear in mind that while the Disc will seek its prey, the Plasmacaster only fires in a straight line at its target.

Thermal vision (blue) is for human hunting, while Electrical (red) vision is for Aliens (and androids) and the third (green) is for tracking Predators, which is only useful in deathmatches or when looking for a lost Disc. Normal vision doesn't allow for any weapon tracking. Since use of the Predator requires smart use of the vision modes (generally, you'll

want to be in one of the specialized modes for hunting), Predators in deathmatches or levels with multiple species find themselves at a confusing disadvantage.

WRIST CLAWS → Depending upon your playing style, wrist claws can be highly useful weapons, especially since they don't use any energy. Perfect for surprise close-range attacks, the secondary mode allows you to "power-up" a strike for added oomph, and is also used to take trophies. As with the Alien, aim for the head of a downed opponent. You'll hear a battle cry if you're successful. Predators, unfortunately, cannot take "live" trophies.

SPEAR GUN → A prime sniper weapon, but very hard to use effectively at close range (particularly when fighting an Alien), the spear gun holds 30 spears. Especially fun tactic: Crouch down to aim at an approaching Alien with a wall behind it, let fly at its torso and if your aim is true it will slam back and be pinned to the wall. Switch to Wrist Claws and bag the head for an easy trophy.

PISTOL → This electrical weapon devastates Xenomorphs, though it's only effective at a short



Invisibility and locking on with the Plasmacaster enables you to down at least one of these marines before they have a clue.

distance (so be careful of close range splash damage). Marines need to be hit dead center with this, but you can often kill several Aliens at once by firing in the midst of a group.

MEDICOMP → Although it uses a lot of energy, the ability to completely heal yourself is obviously invaluable. Though usable while moving, find a quiet spot to do it whenever possible. In multiplayer

matches, opponents always know when you've healed yourself, since the Predator lets out a familiar scream when sticking himself. Ouch.

CLOAKING
NOTES → Cloaking is completely useless against the eyeless Aliens, and Marines are

incredibly astute to any sound or motion — especially things like doors mysteriously opening, things blowing up around them, blurry Predators coming at them. You can use the Wrist Claws and Plasmacaster when cloaked, but any other weapon instantly drops you out of cloaking mode. If you don't use any energy weapons while cloaked, your energy and recharge will null each other out, so you can walk around like this indefinitely without attacking.



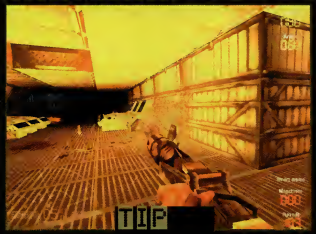
This is what the pistol was made for. Shoot inbetween two aliens and splash damage handles the rest.



Switch to brightest vision mode, zoom in on the marine, let fly with the spear gun and voila! You get a head on a stick.

TIP
When playing a Predator, you can actually perform a "Speargun Jump" much like a Quake Rocket Jump. Fire into the ground and jump at the same time and you'll get an extra push out of it.

The Marine



TOP
Face Huggers hate flame-throwers. Use flares to try and spot them. If you see one, try and flame it, it will still come after you but once it's on fire it can't hurt you (unlike Aliens).

Ah, puny humans... In the war of the species, how can they possibly survive? Easy, when they have really bad-ass weapons at their disposal. Weaker by far than the Predator and much slower than Aliens, humans make up for their disadvantages by having the most powerful and adaptable weapons in the game.

Marines need to constantly find armor and medkits to keep one step away from death. They can't fall very far, don't jump very well, and have to be very careful about what they shoot.

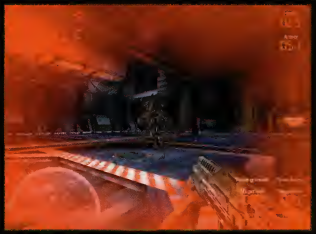
Marines are constantly in a state of backing away and firing, since Xenomorph blood is deadly and splattering the annoying pests at

close range is a sure way to find yourself under an acid shower.

Since you're much weaker and must rely on firepower, it's really a pure game of survival. Aliens will mob you if you stay put, so most levels involve getting from point A to point B as quickly as humanly possible. Always try to have a room cleared before opening a door, however, because Aliens will often be waiting to pounce on you on the other side.

If a Predator is on a level, and Aliens are about, they'll fight. Step to the side and watch the devastation, then pick off the wounded victors from a safe distance.

FIGHTING THE QUEEN



The Marine's queen fight is vastly different than the Predator's. You simply can't do enough damage with the pulse rifle. So, just as in *Aliens* (the movie), you have to use the airlock to suck the bitch out. To do that, open the panel near the lock and hit the switch to open the inner door, then blow all the floor panels near the missiles. You see a switch below and a floor box. Hit the switch, the box opens, then destroy the tubes inside it. Make sure the queen is not nearby when you do this, as she'll kill you with a single blow if she can trap you down there. Also, watch out for the boxes she throws.

On the first two difficulty levels, hit the missiles when she's nearby to stun her, otherwise you need to lure her to the far end of the room then rush back to have enough time. Next, go to the airlock panel again and hit the second switch. Now, you'll have to wait until she's coming after you toward the lock, then rush to the 'closet' where the flamer lies. Shut that door before the room decompresses and you're home free.

Marines have flares they can drop and an image intensifier mode. For the latter, you get a much better view of dark areas, but lose the motion tracker. Still, in

tight areas, you can usually hear Aliens coming, so the intensifier can be far more useful than flares.

MINIGUN → You can't run and shoot the minigun without the barrel kicking up wildly, so get your back to the wall, plant your feet and spray!

FLAME-THROWER → A very deadly weapon — to the Marine. Never use this weapon at close range or in tight quarters, as a flaming Alien will leap toward you and usually set you on fire as well. It's mainly used to keep the Aliens at bay — they'll hiss and stay safely away from the flames. Aliens heat up like cracking eggs when on fire, so if you keep the torch on them, it's possible to fry them to a crisp quickly, before they ever reach you.

TOP

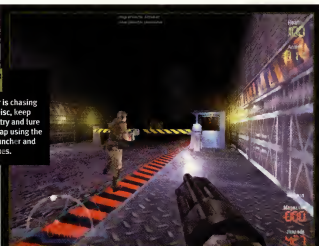
The Marine has the widest variety of weapons, many with secondary functions. Do not to use the Minigun when fighting fast enemies (you won't be able to move while firing). Use the Flamer Aliens as third mode of your grenade launcher to set up traps, but never walk over the traps (it's a fast track to a strawberry jam impersonation.)



TOP

If a Predator is chasing you with a Disc, keep moving and try and lure him into a trap using the Grenade Launcher and the Prox mines.

Watch for Alien generators. They generally cough up about eight — so don't hang around on any level.



On most levels you don't have to worry too much about what you hit, but the bonus Marine levels do sometimes have AI marines wandering about.

The Xenomorph

TIP

You can get health by dicing up fallen foes as well as by jaw attacking them. The amount of health gained varies according to the difficulty setting. You get more on Director's Cut, but a small amount on the other two.

TIP

If you play as the Alien you can do double-damage by attacking your prey from behind.

Speed, agility, incredible jumping spans,

the ability to rend flesh, bone, and scrap metal with its bare claws and a taste for brains ... Yes, the Xenomorph Alien has it all. All except long range weapons. The Alien (as most like to call it) is easily one of the most distinctive, interesting and hard to master characters ever put into a first-person shooter. Consequently, it's also one of the most rewarding to play well. With its fish-eyed view, standard ability to see highlighted prey, and incredible ability to cling to any surface and scamper everywhere, the Alien is simply a ton of ass-kicking fun.

In the single player game, you can horrify AI humans with a hissing taunt, regain health with a head bite and kill with complete abandon. Although you might not

always want to. In an Alien level, the armed humans are your main target, everything else is just snack food, and like any other power-up, it can be beneficial to leave unarmed, cowardly colonists alive until you need the health boost their cranial matter will provide. Live Marines give the most health, but they can be damn hard to get near since they are most likely shooting at you.

This is where the shadows are your friend. Aliens can destroy lights, essentially blinding their prey. This is especially useful in tight corridors, where you can wait on the ceiling for food to go by, then drop to strike. Remember to head bite downed enemies quickly, since bodies disappear after a few seconds.

Aliens have two major limitations: No long range attacks and

Quietly crawling over your prey and dropping down on them is both fun and smart.



they tend to crack like eggs under pressure. Accordingly, they must rely on stealth and guile, circumventing threats rather than confronting them. Two of the biggest threats are androids and auto-cannons set up in hallways. Androids don't show up as bright blue as other humans do, are incredibly tough and often have shotguns (which kill with one blast at close range). Androids can lose limbs and still function, so you have to

strike them hard, fast and brutally to put them down. Auto-cannons must be attacked from behind — an Alien cannot go headlong into a corridor if the guns face you! Levels are always set up to give you a way to circumvent their arc of fire, which is inevitably through an air duct. A single tail whack should be ample for downing a gun and most humans as well.

When fighting well-armed opponents, try to drop down from above while tail whipping, and don't stop moving.

— JASON D'APRILE would like to thank David Stalker and Chris Miller for their invaluable assistance, and promises not to make good on his threat about "eating their brains"

TIP

Use claw and tail attacks. Never use just one, as the other might be more useful (use claws if more than one well-armed Marine is on the screen). You gain great advantage (especially in a multiplayer game) by charging your tail attack (hold down the secondary attack button while proceeding through levels and release when attacking). This will make your tail attack devastating, if not deadly, for all species. Note: An element of self targeting means that your tail attack does not require you to be precise.

FIGHTING THE BOSS



Never get in front of it, as he'll down you with a single Plasmaeater shot. Instead, hit him from the side and behind. The secret of the head bite is all about simply lining the target up in the center of the screen.

Another supremely important Alien technique is the super-jump, which is done by crouching down, looking directly in the direction you want to leap and then pressing jump. The Alien can easily jump several stories, then grab onto a wall or ceiling.

Although it takes practice, this is vital in firefights, since it enables you to leap out of danger, then quickly drop down, get in a powerful strike, then leap again.



Sentinel guns are easily downed from behind, but your toast on the barrel end.

"NOTHING
GETS
BETWEEN
ME
AND
MY
PCXL"

www.pcxl.com



PC Accelerator
bigger, better, faster games

We only cover the important things

X-TRAPOLITAN



AUGUST 1999

Ever-Sex

12 STEPS TO A FULLER,
MORE ORGASMIC LIFE

A BRIEF HISTORY
OF LADIES IN LEATHER

SEX?
MULTIPLE
ORGASMS?
BEAUTY SECRETS?

Dan Egger tells all

CLEAVAGE
CRISIS

We count down the
content of 5 mags

IS YOUR
MAN A
CHEAT-HER?

JENNIFER LOOKATMYFACE -
BRINGS GRRRL POWER
TO GAMING

Erotic.
Sex-orcism

5 WAYS TO
REMOVE THE
EVIL FROM YOUR
MAN'S DISC

X-Tra's
Beauty
Contest

7 MASCOTS
FIGHT THEIR WAY
TO THE TOP

"I WAS
JOHN
ROMERO'S
BITCH"

True stories of
real women who
fell under the
satanic spell of
this programmer's
paralyzing power

Ion Storm Warning

If anything, the soap opera saga of Ion Storm has been a wrangle of words. But of the millions of words written about Ion Storm, not a single one has been in praise of a finished, reviewable game from the company — a statement more telling than any snide joke about John Romero's hair or Todd Porter's "development" history.

Things haven't been so great in D-town, especially after a local weekly took to ripping Ion a new one, publishing select e-mails that made Romero look disinterested, and Porter as if he was about one step above Vanilla Ice on the clue meter. The latest: A rumor billowed to life by Bitch X's Gaming Insider website with posts by former Ion man Mike Wilson intimating that both Ion CEO Todd Porter and Ion Art Director Jerry O'Flaherty had gotten the axe after John Romero fired them and had police escort them from the building.

As PCXL goes to press, nothing has come of the rumors, yet denials from Ion execs and decidedly muddled tones from major investor Eidos continue. No doubt the truth is somewhere in between the two camps.

Here at PCXL, we've decided to take up the task of translating the war of words for you, dear gamer. Consider it a "straight" translation, like in old Godzilla movies, only run through our special PCXLinator, which renders all statements issued from corporate gaming types absurdly blunt:



FOR SALE: Super fast Lotus, must sell even faster, I'm gonna need the money.

JOHN ROMERO
Game Developer, Ion Storm →
Words → "I'll make you my bitch."
Truth → "Tell Carmack I'll get back to work in a minute. Huh? I'm not still at Id?"

JERRY O'FLAHERTY
Art Director, Ion Storm →
Words → "No comment so far."
Truth → "My silence will only incriminate me further. I must tell the truth — I was responsible for *Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3*."

FANTASY FRAG

OUR OWN DAN EGGER

WHY WE HATE HIM → Is he leaving? Is he staying? We work in the same office and can't figure it out, and it's damned frustrating — for us and our readers. Of course, we don't hate Dan. We love Dan. (Not in that way, perv.) We just enjoy the fact that he's such an easy target. He provides us with hours of amusement and tons of fodder for funny X-tra bits. Hell, without him around, what are we going to make fun of? We might have to (gasp) work!

HOW HE SHOULD BE FRAGGED → We've sent him on a date with *Extreme Bull Rider*, forced him to drink "gunk drinks," and locked him in a room for two days with a slew of bad games. We've made fun of his school, his family, and his writing. Frankly, there's not much left to do to the poor guy. But he's pissed up this time. He should be forced to work a "real job" until he loses what little mind he has left, and is forced to come crying back to us, begging for forgiveness and acceptance back into our fold. (Wait a minute, hasn't that already happened?) Stay tuned to PCXL to see if Dan survives this brutal fragging.

JOHN KAVANAUGH
Publishing Director, Eidos →
Words → "I'm here because I have complete and utter faith in Ion products."
Truth → "Faith" is another word for a shitload of money, and at Eidos, if we care about anything, it's our money."

BITCH X
Internet Rumor Pusher →
Words → "Porter and O'Flaherty were indeed escorted out yesterday. John did fire them himself, at their meeting in (San Francisco) with Eidos."
Truth → "I swear, this time the rumors are true and I promise to update my site more than once every three months."

MIKE BRESLIN
CEO, Gathering of Developers
Development, Ion Storm →
Words → "Nobody at Ion Storm is getting fired."
Truth → "Baseball is still America's pastime, Michael Jackson is a perfectly normal, heterosexual male, and PCXL's Ed Lee gets to work on time every day."

MIKE LION
CEO, Gathering of Developers →
Words → "A cure for a particularly nasty cancer will be discovered in downtown Dallas today... Rejoice gamers, rejoice."
Truth → "I'm so glad I got out of there when I did... now this place is fun."

TODD PORTER
CEO, Ion Storm →
Words → "Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated."
Truth → "I am the Walrus, Coo Coo Ca Choo."

Every weekday on our website w. frag whatever the heck makes us angry, and occasionally w. frag somethg just because it needs it. Find out what we fragged today on www.pcxl.com. You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND BABES.

THE POWER METER

Every player in the industry was at E3 and PCXL was there to determine who are the big shots and who is full of air.

THIS LIST
RANKS MONTH

1 7

2 10

3 2

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5 9

6 1

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8 -

9 8

10 5

OTHER
CONTINUED 5

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SIERRA → Team Fortress 2 was the game of the show and Tribes 2, SWAT 3, Homeworld, and Gabriel Knight 3 looked good too. Hands down top company at the show.

INTERPLAY → Giants looked quirky, brilliant, and fun all at once. Don't forget Kingpin, Messiah, Planetescape, and Star Trek: Starfleet Command.

ELECTRONIC ARTS → Block & White dazzled everyone. It will likely come out well after Ricky "I'm not gay just real happy" Martin, but until then, EA has its sports franchises.

GOD → A lineup of moral games looked great. Heavy Metal: FAKX 2 and Max Payne laid the way.

ACTIVISION → Soldier Of Fortune was hidden behind a curtain due to violent content, but it does look good. Oh, and they have Quake III Arena.

HASBRO → MechWarrior 3 and Rollercoaster Tycoon showed they can supply good games, but all could be lost if the "new" Pong, Missile Command, and Q-Bert suffer from the suckitude that plagued Frogger.

MICROSOFT → Midtown Madness series is a blast, controllers are top of the line, sports games don't look half bad, and they own the entire world.

EIDOS → Booth bartenderess with see-through dress: The highlight of E3.

LUCASARTS → Old we mention that we hate Jar Jar! Pod Racer is fun, TPM kinda blows, but Dark Forces 3 is what we're really waiting for.

3Dfx → Forget Creative 3D Blaster Ultra and Diamond Viper V770 Ultra, simplicity in the form of Voodoo 3 will win the 3D board war.

FOX INTERACTIVE → Half-naked women in a cage would normally be good enough for top ten, but the half-naked man scared us.

TOMB RAIDER IV → If we did see it and they're not saying we didn't, they'd make us sign an agreement so that we wouldn't tell you it looked just like TRILL.

RECOVER YOUR SOUL

GAMESCAN
...FOR THE LADIES

The Twelve Step Program For Ditching Everquest

What has Everquest wrought? A nation of geeks glued to their monitors trying to buy a Mino's axe, that's what. The weekend used to be about beer, babes, and our primal urge to seek them out at all costs, but Everquest has made so-called men turn into rat-killing, "plat"-saving, bind-casting virtual sissies who'd rather be "leveling" than loving. Well, my friend, fighting addiction (and that's what it is) can be difficult, so we've created a 12-step guide to help you get off *Eversmack*. And it's a hell of a lot cheaper than six months in rehab (or six months of Everquest bills, for that matter).

1. We admitted we were powerless over Everquest — that our lives had become unmanageable. See that "played" button on the right-hand side of your Ever-screen? Push it — we dare you. If you could've fathered children in less time, then you are definitely an addict.

Welcome to EverQuest!
You have entered North Qeynos.
Ellan begins to cast a spell.
Ellan's skin turns hard as wood.
Osagorin's birthday: Thu Apr 08 21:33
Total time playing Osagorin: 6 days, 3 hours

2. We come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. This doesn't mean that the level 30 Paladin can restore your sanity. HE'S NOT REAL. (A GM comes close, but not quite.)

3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of PCXL. This works out best for everybody. Good stuff like money, beer, and porn can be sent directly to our offices. Hey, you won't need it — you've still got nine more steps to go.

4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (We had to look this up.)



Mmmm — beats killing rats.

Moral (adj) — Conforming to a standard of what is good and right.

If you think we're talking about the stuff your character carries around, you may need more help than we thought.

5. We admitted to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs. Admitting your problem to yourself is one thing, but finding another person to pester is something else. Sorry, chat rooms don't count. We suggest getting blitzed at a bar and whining to the bartender — it always works for Mike. Just don't call us.

6. We were entirely ready to have PCXL remove all these defects of our character. You can't get off *Eversmack* unless you truly and deeply want to quit. Those who aren't ready to quit will find "enablers" (a.k.a. credit card companies) who will lead them slowly back to temptation.

7. We humbly asked PCXL to remove our shortcomings. Attention *Eversmack*-addicted ladies



Nice, um ... shortcomings

(and ladies only): Replace the word "shortcomings" with "shorts" and we're on.

8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. You may also want to make a list of the people you will harm by quitting *Everquest* — like your ISP, the members of your mammoth-hunting party, and that little Chinese restaurant around the corner that delivers all night.

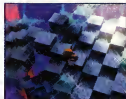
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. Have sex with your girlfriend (or for the less fortunate, spend quality time with your hand), call your mother, visit your dealer (he misses you), take your dog for a walk, but first, please proceed directly to the shower.

10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. Pop in *Half-Life* and give it a whirl. Wasn't it wrong to play *Everquest* instead of it? We thought you'd agree with us.

11. We sought to improve our conscious contact with PCXL as we understand it. Examples: Visit our website at www.pcxl.com, write us letters at letters@pcxl.com, and go to your local newsstand and place copies of PCXL in front of other less interesting gaming mags.

12. Having had a somewhat spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other Everquest-oholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. Go out and spread the word: You don't have to be an addict. Go outside, drink a beer, get slapped by a girl ... Oh well, what the hell, go ahead and slay just one more rat. We can't stay away from the damned game, either. See you in Norrath, nerd!

Get ready, ladies! We've scoured the planet for the 12 hunkiest, most addictive games on the planet and are dishing the juicy details. Slinging the hot gossip is the mother/daughter diva duo du jour, Joan and Melissa Rivers. Talk to us, girlfriends!



Q*BERT

Developer → Sony Pictures
Publisher → Hasbro
Release Date → Fall '99

JOAN: This license is older than my first face! Q*Bert came out in the early '80s ... just like Liberace ... and is now experiencing a bigger comeback than Burt Reynolds' back hair. (And that Q*Bert can jump on me anytime he wants!) Missy?

MELISSA: Thanks, Mom. As you know, Q*Bert's gameplay hasn't changed much. The player still hops from cube to cube, changing its color, while avoiding old enemies Colly, Uggs, and the gang. Adding both classic and adventure modes should extend its appeal beyond nostalgia addicts.



1602 AD

Developer → Sunflowers
Publisher → GT Interactive
Release Date → August '99

JOAN: Coincidentally, 1602 AD is also the date of my last orgasm! [Gasp] Can we talk? If they can put a man on the moon, why can't they put one on me, dammit? As the Columbus of realtime strategy, the player sails the world looking for action, which just goes to show you that Madonna was born 400 years too late. Over to you, Melissa!

MELISSA: Umm ... thanks again, Mom. 1602 AD blends strategy, colonization, commerce, and battle, and even includes a game editor to build new worlds if you tire of the 900 islands included.



MASTER BIG GAME HUNTER

Developer → EA Sports
Publisher → EA
Release Date → Fall '99

JOAN: This is the only game on the list that rewards you for hunting tail — deer tail, that is. And it lets you shoot up more often than Courtney Love. Oh, grow up! You know it's true.

MELISSA: However, our lawyers would like us to mention that she's totally clean now. *MBGH* offers six different hunting "worlds," first- and third-person perspectives, the option of hunting white tail, black tail, or mule deer, and multiplayer play over the Internet. Beer is not included, though.



THEME PARK WORLD

Developer → Bullfrog
Publisher → EA
Release Date → Fall '99

JOAN: My old friend Heidi Abramowitz — that tramp — was her own neighborhood theme park. [gasp] Can we talk? She wore a T-shirt that said "You must be this tall to ride." Her bedroom was equipped with turnstiles. Her boyfriends would raise their arms in the air and shout "Wheel" before going down on her. Now, back to you, Missy!

MELISSA: What my mom is trying to say is that *Theme Park World* is a sequel to the original *Theme Park*, but bigger and better in every way. The brightly-colored, fantastic rides, and themes are more kid-oriented than *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, but one-ups the competition by letting the player take a spin on any ride from a first-person perspective. I want my own show!

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO SPANK

The first lesson any proper young boy learns about life is that you shouldn't hit girls. But it's not entirely true. The "later in life" addendum to this rule: Unless they really, really like it — in which case, spank away. This month we've changed the title to "Women We Love To Spank," since the Dark Mistress takes great pleasure in being tortured. Her first appearance was in *Dungeon Keeper*, where the little nymphette squealed gleefully each time you tossed her into the torture chamber. Now she's back in *Dungeon Keeper 2*, and she'll have more polygons, an even higher tolerance for pain, and plenty of skin-tight leather.

OTHER LEATHER WOMEN

No we aren't talking about overturned, reptilian, geriatrics here. Instead we are pontificating the world's sexiest leather-wearing babes. Granted, any hot chick who wears tight leather is good, but these four ladies have given us a standard by which all other leather-wearing women will be judged



LEAHY'S THUNDERDOME

FAMOUS FOR → Being the rock-a-roll playin', bitch, leather-clad, female version of The Temptations' "My Guy."
PLACE IN LEATHER HISTORY → Not nearly as hot as her sister Missy, but Leather was the first TV character to be named ... uh ... leather. And according to Arthur Fonzarelli she was, "a calamander."



MICHELLE PFEIFFER

FAMOUS FOR → Being the skinny, yet sexy, star of countless sex-satirical comedies. She was Ally McBeal before Calista Flockhart ever started piking up heretics.
PLACE IN LEATHER HISTORY → The only good thing about *Batman Returns*, she wore the tightest leather outfit ever donned by a woman (don't even count the pants she wore in the "Overall" category).



PAMELA ANDERSON

FAMOUS FOR → Erotic bosoms, horrible TV shows, the brain power of a mosquito, and several erotic movie romps with hubby Tommy Lee.
PLACE IN LEATHER HISTORY → Another three featured Pam in and out of a tight leather outfit while being holed down, just in the first 10 minutes of the movie (we couldn't stomach any more after the ecology started).



EMMA PEELE

FAMOUS FOR → Getting "tem out in *Dangerous Liaisons* and reminding warm-blooded men exactly what makes women so damn beautiful.
PLACE IN LEATHER HISTORY → Her role as Emma Peel (and more importantly, her tight leather outfit) was about the only decent thing in the *Avengers* movie, and reason enough to rent the movie one more time.

DARK MISTRESS

Get a life with Gia DeCarlo

For those studly gamers who actually manage to snag a girl, the troubles are just beginning. Now you have to deal with issues like "quality time," cuddling, chick flicks, saying she's prettier than Rebecca Romijn Stamos with a straight face (very important), and of course — jealousy. After all, if you managed to score a woman who doesn't look like Robin Williams in a wig, then you know that other men are constantly checking her out. I, along with the PCXL boys, have compiled this simple quiz. Answer honestly and the truth is yours.

SEX-CAPEDES: Is your woman getting it somewhere else?

When on the phone, you overhear her say things like, "Yeah, it was good for me too" and "No, he doesn't have a clue"

☐ True ☐ False

She encourages boys' night out — suggesting, almost demanding, that you spend the night somewhere else

☐ True ☐ False

She comes home late from work every Thursday, and she hasn't had a job in three years

☐ True ☐ False

Most of her male friends are sailors

☐ True ☐ False

When you suggest a threesome, she says, "Sure, you can join in if you want"

☐ True ☐ False

She does P.R. in the games industry

☐ True ☐ False

When having sex, she screams out all of your friends' names

☐ True ☐ False

After sex, she runs a head-to-head comparison between you and the guy who she just finished screwing

☐ True ☐ False

You keep finding new boxers in the laundry, and they aren't yours

☐ True ☐ False

You have to take a number to have sex with her

☐ True ☐ False

You ask her if she likes sex and she says, "With you?"

☐ True ☐ False

Your name is Steven Atkins of San Francisco, California

☐ True ☐ False

SCORING: For every answer of True give yourself 10 points and for every answer of False you get 0

0 — As far as you know your girlfriend is perfectly faithful. Either that or she's really good at hiding it

10-20 — She may not be cheating, but she wishes she was

30-100 — Trying to find a friend she hasn't slept with could be impossible

110-130 — Will Chamberlain would be jealous of her accomplishments



GAMESCAN



FELONY PURSUIT

Developer → Polygon Studios
Publisher → THQ
Release Date → Winter '99

JOAN: Finally... they made a game out of the QJ Bronco chase! Okay, not really, but *Felony Pursuit* is so gorgeous that playing it may replace my dream of living in Ricky Martin's lock strap. Play a game of Cops and Robbers — choose either character — and burn rubber through a huge city covering over 60 virtual miles. Just don't forget the bloody glove — a fashion no-no.

MELISSA: Nicely put, Mom. While *Felony Pursuit* is still early and lacks implementation of a collision system, the city map is completed and intricately designed by European architects. Realtime lighting allows the game world to evolve gradually from dusk 'til dawn. If this game is a crime, then slap me in cuffs.

WHERE THE BABES ARE

NOW, WE HOPE THIS SETTLES IT ONCE AND FOR ALL...

Ever since the launch of PCXL we have heard desperate accusations of us being sexist, and some have even called us porn. To put this garbage to rest, we compared the June issues of five popular magazines. Of these five, only PCXL has been lambasted for their babe count. This exhaustive research should finally prove that PCXL isn't the only magazine to appreciate the finer of the species. We just happen to cover games as well. Just consider the babes a bonus.

PC ACCELERATOR

BABES → 35

CLEAVAGE → 20

NIPPLE → 1

CHEEKS (the butt kind, not the face kind) → 2

BABE QUOTIENT → 2.4

PC GAMER

BABES → 4

CLEAVAGE → 5

NIPPLE → 0

CHEEKS → 0

BABE QUOTIENT → 0.4

MAXIM

BABES → 40

CLEAVAGE → 23

NIPPLE → 5

CHEEKS → 2

BABE QUOTIENT → 3.3

MADEMOISELLE

BABES → 82

CLEAVAGE → 35

NIPPLE → 3

CHEEKS → 3

BABE QUOTIENT → 4.5

COSMOPOLITAN

BABES → 217

CLEAVAGE → 61

NIPPLE → 3

CHEEKS → 5

BABE QUOTIENT → 8.7

KEY →

BABES → A babe must be a photo of a hot girl, known or unknown, and each babe is only counted once. Therefore, math geeks, five pictures of Shannon Doherty only count as one babe, and Madeline Albright DOES NOT count as a babe at all (that cost PCXL one point)

CLEAVAGE → Any shot where roundness of the naked breast is visible on an attractive woman is counted. Therefore Shannon Doherty scored five cleavage points for Maxim, but only one babe point. **NIPPLE** → Any protrusion through clothing or other example of nipple bits being visible (on an attractive woman). **CHEEKS** → Any skin shots which clearly show FEMALE buttocks in a flattering, sexual manner

SCORING →

BABES → 1 point

CLEAVAGE → 5 points

NIPPLE → 10 points

CHEEKS → 10 points



PHARAOH

Developer → Impressions
Publisher → Sierra
Release Date → Fall '99

JOAN: Farrah? [gasp] Farrah Fawcett is so stupid! She's so dumb she saw a sign that said "Wet Floor" — and she did! Her ears double as a windtunnel. She thought "polygon" meant her parrot died. Wait... Pharaoh, not Farrah? Missy, tell us about it.

MELISSA: Pharaoh is a strategic city-building game set in ancient Egypt. Pitched as a pseudo-prequel to the Caesar series, it includes a farming model based on the flooding of the Nile, naval warfare, and a unique Egyptian flavor. Your crusty old mummy is guaranteed to love it!





ORCS: REVENGE OF THE ANCIENT

Developer → Berkeley Systems
Publisher → Sierra
Release Date → Winter '99

JOAN: *OROTA* is a fantasy strategy game based on J.R.R. Tolkien's "Middle-Earth" series. I'm not sure which ancient is looking for revenge, but my bet is on Joan Collins. As an Orc chieftain, it is your job to keep the peace between your troops while surviving bloody quests. Over to you, Missy...

MELISSA: You command armies in real-time 3D combat, choosing their weapons and customizing fighting moves, and eventually pit your Orcs in multiplayer matches over the web. And the revenge of the ancient could refer to the life being sucked out of you by a domineering old bitch who hangs on to you just to have a so-called career. Now back to you, Mom!



THRONE OF DARKNESS

Developer → Click Entertainment
Publisher → Accium
Release Date → Spring 2000

JOAN: At first I thought the *Throne of Darkness* was Marilyn Manson's toilet, but then I heard it was a *Shogun* meets *Doblo* version of "King of the Hill," in which the player, as a Japanese warlord, attempts to topple a Dark Warlord and, ultimately, take his place. Or, as they call it at Ion Storm — Tuesday. Take it away, Missy!

MELISSA: *TOD* is as much about multiplayer as it is about single player, Mom. You compete cooperatively with other warlords to become Dark Warlord, but become their prey when you succeed. Speaking of which, aren't you ready to retire, Mom?

FEMALE READER OF THE MONTH

Staff celebrates opportunity to use pseudo-celebrity status to get laid

Nobody was more shocked than the PCXL staff to learn that we had a gasp — female reader. Not only that, but this babe isn't half bad to look at either. Then this little cutie started sending us pictures of herself in less and less clothing (we weren't complaining). Being the benevolent types that we are, we decided to share the wealth. Here she is — the only confirmed female reader of PCXL.

Note: If you are a female reader, or would like to impersonate one, just send photos (with magazine in hands to verify) to imababe@pcxl.com.



NAME → Lisa Chang
AGE → 29
JOB → Executive Secretary
WHERE ARE YOU FROM → Astoria, Queens, NY
ETHNIC BACKGROUND → Latina and Asian
HEIGHT/WEIGHT → 5'5", 34C-24-34
STATUS → Single (with boyfriend, sorry guys)
SEXUAL PREFERENCE → I am the biggest flirt when it comes to lovemaking. I enjoy role-playing, love pleasing my man, and will do anything to satisfy him completely. Am I kinky? Not really. Out of bed, I'm a pussycat. In bed, I'm a tigress!
FAVORITE GAMES? *Hof-Life*, *Grim Fandango*, *Unreal*, *Quake II*, *Doom Series*, and my old time favorite, *Wolfenstein 3D*
YOUR IDEAL MAN? I like them tall, handsome, in shape, and with a goatee. Goatees are a major turn-on!
WOULD YOU DATE A HARDCORE GAMER? I would definitely date a hardcore gamer. I need the competition when I'm playing. Too

bad my current boyfriend isn't into gaming like me
HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT

PCXL? Started reading other game magazines, and bought PCXL just to give it a try. Fell instantly in love with it. Love the articles, reviews, the TWO CD-ROMs full of demos and utilities. (No other magazine does that.)

WHAT DO YOU FIND SEXY? I enjoy watching myself playing games while naked. I love the way my breasts bounce every time I play racing games using my force feedback steering wheel



(P.S. Amazingly, this is NOT a joke — we think!)

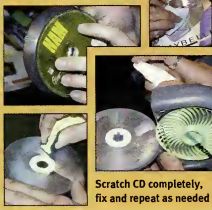
GAME EXORCISM

SOME THINGS ARE TRULY BETTER OFF DEAD

Evil comes in many different forms. It can be in the form of a new pop sensation (tell us Ricky Martin isn't evil), an insurance salesman, or even a game.

At PCXL when confronted with evil incarnate we don't get mad, we get even. The latest slab of Satan's secretions to come into our offices tried to slip in disguised as the game *Shattered Light*. The symptoms were all there: Buggy code, uninspired gameplay, a really cheap box, and a name which, when analyzed and deconstructed, actually means "The Dark One" (or something close to that).

Rather than simply destroy the game, we decided to perform an exorcism. In our first attempt to exorcise the demons, we tried to rub evil (NAM) against evil (*Shattered Light*) hoping that the two would cancel each other out. Both discs suffered terrible wounds in the conflict, but when we brought them back from the edge of death (see *Game Resurrected*) the evil remained. Next we decided we would scrub the heinous code right off the disc. We could see the evil. It was on our hands, on our desk, and in our minds. Suddenly the disc rose and spun its head around 360 degrees and unleashed its venomous code onto our laps (a la Linda Blair circa 1973). When we tried to bring it back to life, it became clear that once the evil was removed from *Shattered Light*, there wasn't anything left.



Scrub CD completely, fix and repeat as needed

GAME RESURRECTOR Wipeout vs. the Disc Doctor

Here's a head-to-head showdown of two products that claim to be able to save your scratched discs. We tested each of these products under extreme circumstances. Here are the scientific results:

DISC	WIPEOUT	THE DISC DOCTOR
The Verve Pipe CD with minor scratches	After much scrubbing and reapplying it actually got the disc to work	Similar success with much less effort or mess
Microwaved Trophy Buck	It was too late for this game	Even the machine couldn't bring this back to life
Waffle Ironed Rival Reims	The creases were too much	The abnormal shape of the disc meant it wouldn't even fit in the contraption
Extreme Bultrider after date with Dan	There were no external scratches. The disc had just lost the desire to live	A Disc Psychologist was the only hope for this one
NAM and Shattered Light (scratched heavily)	It took several applications and some burned skin, but the evil was working again	Much easier than Wipeout, and it also worked
Shattered Light Scratched to hell	Six applications and many scratches were gone, but it still wouldn't work	Even with the Wipe-out formula inside the disc doctor, this game couldn't be brought back
VERDICT	Effective on normal scratches, and easier for repairing simple to spot scratches.	An easier way to remove mass amounts of scratches. However, for just repairing a few scratches, Wipeout is the more effective tool.

Random Preview Generator

BEHIND THE SCENES AT PC ACCELERATOR

In an effort to cut costs and streamline our previewing process (Read: Due to extreme laziness), we have developed a new game preview machine: The Random Preview Generator v1.0. Here's the brand new prototype of what is sure to save us hours of time — hours better spent playing games and/or trolling for porn.

Write down the following, and plug them into the corresponding blanks on the Preview-o-Matic. The result will be a comprehensive preview that's bound to please any P.R. rep in the business, and ensure gross amounts of free stuff in the future.

A city (1)

A noun that would be a good name for a pit bull (2)

Another name for a pit bull (3)

A good name for a supervillain (4)

A synonym for "good" (5)

A number between 1 and 4 (14)

Select one of the following: (13)

Post-apocalyptic
Fantasy
WWII

Three numbers between 10 and 20 (15, 16, 17)

A music group that was popular six months ago (24)

Pick five of the following: (9, 10, 11, 12, 27)

massively multiplayer
seamless
revolutionary
fully rotatable
interactive
fully 3D
innovative
customizable
nonlinear
scalable
original

Pick five of the following: (6, 7, 8, 19, 26)

volumetric lighting
realtime shadows
curved surfaces

32-bit color
vast 3D world
revolutionary AI
fluid animation

Pick three of the following: (18, 22, 23)

Quake II
Tomb Raider
Diablo
StarCraft
Half-Life

Pick one of the following: (20)

Quake II
Unreal

Pick one of the following: (21)

best
best-looking
most addictive
most anticipated
most solid
most promising
most playable

Pick one of the following: (25)

all goes well
it can live up to the hype
the developers reach their goal
the developers vision is realized
all goes according to plan
it gets enough marketing support

PREVIEWS

Darkstone: The Darkening

Darkstone:

It's like (22) meets (23)

Currently in development, *Darkstone: The Darkening* is a departure for (1) based (2) Studios, whose previous game, *Dork (3)*, was a critical hit, if a bit of a commercial disappointment. The sequel brings a lot of subtle improvements to the table. Unlike some developers, (2) is not content to simply add on a few bells and whistles and call it a sequel. *D:TD* is something special.

First off are the improved graphics, courtesy of the aptly-named (4) Engine, which has (5) additions such as (6), (7), and (8). There are so many additions in fact, that the (20) engine on which it is based is almost unrecognizable. In addition, the team has recently made the addition of (26) into the mix.



... as the darkness falls on one of the darkest games in history.



"All I can say is 'Damn, this shit is dark!' — Ed Lee

Also, there is the more (9) and (10) nature of the game. *Darkstone: The Darkening's* (11) and (12) user interface will create a more immersive environment," says a (2) representative. In a (27) (14)-person perspective you will wander around the game's (15) levels, battling any of (16) enemies with (17) weapons, all in a (13) setting. "We really liked what (18) did with their (19). We're taking this to the next level," said the spokesman. The game's soundtrack hasn't been overlooked either, with well-known group (24) supplying the background music.

Even in its early state, this game shows a lot of potential. If (25), *Darkstone: The Darkening* could have what it takes to challenge the big boys. It could be one of the (21) titles of the year.

GAMESCAN



DEMOLITION RACER

Developer → Pitbull Syndicate
Publisher → Accolade
Release Date → Summer '99

JOAN: The last thing I blew up was an inflatable doll — and I still couldn't get a rise out of it! Can we talk? [gasp] The only thing I race for these days is the bathroom. Men my age don't chase me anymore — because they're all dead! Missy?

MELISSA: [deep sigh] *Demolition Racer* is similar to the popular *Demolition Derby* series, but updated with better graphics, and hopefully, more realistic physics. Multiple vehicles, a variety of weather effects, and an assortment of multiplayer modes round out the package.



THE SIMS

Developer → Maxis
Publisher → EA
Release Date → Fall '99

JOAN: The perfect game for the nosy, gossiping control freak in all of us. *The Sims* allows the player to oversee a neighborhood full of simulated people. Create your own dysfunctional family and then help them become happy and well-adjusted or trailer trash.

MELISSA: *The Sims* is from the maker of the non-controversial *Sims City*, but as evidenced from the demos running at E3, it has a voyeuristic appeal due to some of its racy soap opera antics. And do I look well adjusted? I hate you, Mom!

OFFICE QUOTES

"I can say that though, because I'm perfect"

→ Dan Egger, talking about dumping girls because of their nostril size

"There are some advantages, like staying home and playing with yourself"

→ Mike Salmon on the phone with some girl

“Titties”

→ Entire letter portion of
an e-mail from photographer
Ed Fox about our cover model

"Should I threaten to bust a cap in the senator's ass?"

→ Mike Salmon while prepping for "Meet The Press"

"Ed, you jammy git!"

→ Yelled out by Rob during a heated *Quake II* battle

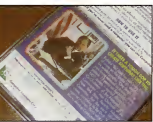
FREE STUFF WE HATE

Game companies are usually more than willing to give loads of cool free stuff to magazine editors at the yearly E3 convention. That's why one unsuspecting **PCXL** editor was initially confused, and then a little disturbed, to have *Bo Dietl's One Tough Computer Cop* thrust into his hands by a roving booth babe. (And frankly, we'll take whatever booth babes thrust at us ... no questions asked ... as long as our girlfriends don't find out.)

The cover depicts a group of *Children of the Corn* wannabes, huddled together at a slumber party of the damned, staring at the unearthly glow of a 50-inch monitor (what a setup!) while phantom URL's like www.sex.hot.com and www.drugs-drugs.com slither around their cherubic faces. (The URL's don't work — we tried.)

This software promises to allow parents to spy on their kids ... after the fact. It keeps track of the "naughty" sites without keeping kids from getting to them in the

first place. Now don't get us wrong, we don't have any problem with keeping impressionable



young 'uns away from bad stuff on the web, but c'mon ... *Bo Diddley*? That's the name of a hillbilly banjo player, not a tough cop.



GREAT EGGERS EXPECTATIONS

SENIOR EDITOR RELEASED BACK INTO THE WILD

"We knew when we found him that this day would eventually come," said a tearful Mike Salmon, reflecting on the impending release of Senior Editor Dan Egger to his natural habitat (whatever that might be).

Found two years ago by Imagine employees after being struck by a speeding car driven by Matthew Broderick, a battered Dan Egger

was nursed back to health by the editors of *PC Accelerator*. As time went by, he became domesticated and eventually found a home among them where he flourished (uhh ... well, kind of) as Senior Editor. His mating patterns remain a mystery, however.

But alas, the staff knew the time might come when Dan would have to return to nature so he could run free with the other Eggers, *and if possible, mate.* "We've tagged

Dan with a microwave radio transponder so we can track him and learn more about his migration patterns," noted Disc Editor Ed Lee. "Our only hope is that a natural predator doesn't kill and eat him first."

Dan Egger, scientifically categorized as *Donknottsius Eggeralus*, is believed to be the only one of his kind living in captivity. Originator of the famous "Eggermeister" shot and known for his love of

"Cosmopolitons," Dan will be missed by his keepers, even if his propensity for public nudity resulted in a few awkward moments and one extremely traumatized female PR rep.

"Goodbye, little guy," whispered Assistant Editor Chuck Osborn after releasing Dan from his pen. "Don't catch rickets, y'hear?" Executive Editor Rob Smith was unavailable for comment (see below).



→ We learned something very important this past month: Don't let Mike hold e-mail contests. We're still wading through "Find The Fake Ad" contest entries, but keep 'em coming and you too may win "fabulous" prizes (quotes = dripping sarcasm). Missives that made it through our elaborate filtering programs are answered below.

MONTHLY VISITORS

In the July 1999 issue of your magazine on page 116 there is a section on the bottom right called Special Friends Drop By. Is the middle person Katie Holmes?

OutragerLT

Yes, it is. As promised, she's dropping by.



"Only an idiot would suggest a Hillbilly hardware section."

I strongly think that PCXL should have a section about Goofus and Gallant titled "Installing Hardware The Hillbilly Way." I think you should have this in the Tech-Philes section and print this letter in the magazine and make fun of me, too, and please add a sexy picture, too!

TKavanagh

Three out of four ain't bad.

TAKE A HINT

I had the interesting experience of meeting Mike Salmon at Eg. When I remarked that your maga-

zine is very addictive he replied "Yah, it's a lot like smoking crack." The glazed look in his eyes told me that he quite possibly was speaking from experience so I slowly backed away and ran into the comforting arms of the Eldos chicks.

David Parker

Umm, David ... that glazed look had nothing to do with crack. It was because you were blocking Mike's view of the Eldos chicks cavorting behind you. And you're boring as hell. Breath mint?

FEMALE READERS SPEAK OUT

I recently read a part of your magazine called "Fantasy Frag" and I have to say I was very disappointed in you guys. The article was over the Backstreet Boys and you disrespected them in the lowest possible way. Wouldn't you rather girls be dreaming about the Backstreet Boys, than say ... Marilyn Manson?

Kandi

No and no. We don't care who (hot) girls dream about unless it's us. (See p. 12). Warning hormonal teenage girls away from smarmy boy bands is a public service announcement. As for MM ... that's just nasty.

BETTER THAN CRACK

While I wait for one of many patches (porn) to finish downloading I figured that I should commend you all for the excellent mag you put out. I work at EB and we actually have a waiting list for the new issues. I have gotten at least four of my friends to subscribe and I am sure more will follow. I accidentally leave them

at the local coffee house/cyber cafe I help run, then take them home and watch them squirm like junkies waiting for the next issue. Again, thank you for making me laugh article after article, review after review.

Daniel Combs

You're welcome, Daniel, but don't be so sadistic. PCXL Withdrawal Syndrome isn't a joke. The mental image of a coffeehouse full of squirming geeks is pretty damn funny, though.

PRaise We Love

I am a former subscriber of *PC Games*, who had his subscription switched over to your magazine when they went under. I read the first issue (June '99, #10) and thought it was OK, but then I read the Gamescan section, and caught Phil Hartman's comment to Kenny Kingston from beyond the grave ... Now I want to know if I can get a lifetime subscription and a job application.

Ed Milne

Thanks, Ed. Our new policy of abusing dead celebrities whenever possible has been a big hit. Next month: DeForest Kelley — "Dammit Jim, I'm telling you I'm a corpse, not a doctor!"

FOUL PLAY?

I noticed that in two pictures of Hector in the June PCXL, he had heavy eyelashes. Scarecrows don't normally have any eyelashes, so I became suspicious. Then I noticed something else: Rickets is a poison, and is usually only caught through injection. IT'S A CONSPIRACY! First it was the injection of rickets into Rupee, then it was the fake photos of Hector. "They" killed Hector and Rupee, and no one knows who could be next.

Jojo, The Deranged, Mutant, Circus Monkey

Don't be so paranoid, Jojo. Just because Chuck was hired following Rupee's sudden death and was openly jealous that Hector received more mail than him doesn't mean anything. Ed looks a little nervous, though.

WE STAND OUT-GEKKED

In your review of *X-Wing Alliance* u didn't seem to understand how the Millennium Falcon could set a record of 12 parsecs for the Kessel Run since parsecs is a unit of distance — allow me to explain. The Kessel Run involves a trip through "the Maw" which is a dense region with multiple black holes and other dangerous phenomena, so the shorter the route u take, the more dangerous it is. You probably won't print this letter out of sheer embarrassment but I couldn't let this go.

Mark (Star Wars Freak) Hamalainen

We feel very embarrassed for "u," Mark, but we'll print the letter from "u" anyway.

MORE THAN WE WANT TO KNOW

I wanted to send a special thanks to Mr. T. Devon Sharkey for sharing his girlfriend with us. The "Dressing Up Like Lara Croft" fantasy is one that I have often shared with my wife. May I borrow her costume sometime? And if it's not too much of a problem, could I borrow her legs, breasts, and ass too? I don't think my wife's "mother of three" body could do the outfit justice.

W. H.

P.S. Is a private, 10 minutes in the bathroom with your magazine considered too much lustung?

Don't worry, W.H., we have a feeling that your wife's "mother of three" body will become a "divorced mother of three" body very soon. And no, 10 minutes in the bathroom isn't too much lustung — it's just too much information.

FIRST PERSON

Mining the past ... and hitting a sewer line

Pong 1999. Think long and hard about those two words, and you'll be hard-pressed to disagree with this chilling conclusion: Retro gaming is quickly becoming a sharp pain in the ass.

I'm all for legal emulators ("Yes, officer, I own each and every one of those 284 arcade machines in my one-bedroom apartment. Why do you ask?") and I enjoy old-school game collections most of the time, but it's these damn updates that really get me swearing like a Teamster. Now we've got a souped-up *Frogger* and a reworked *Centipede* from Hasbro Interactive, who so far has been the worst offender of the development bunch. Coming soon from their hallowed halls of crap,

expect *Missile Command 3D* and an updated *Pong* — *Pong* for God's sake.

The company describes it thusly: "Lush 3D graphics, all new paddles and unique features add a whole new element of challenge to the game." No matter how much 3D acceleration and colored lighting they heap on, it's still two paddles and a ball.

A 1999 version of a 1950 pile of dog poop is still just a pile of dog poop, no matter how much you dress it up like that hot girl on the bus who ignores you.

Hasbro Interactive's new *Frogger*: A fine classic update — one last time — for me to poop on!

My fetishes aside, why do we always feel the need to shove our best memories out on stage again, like a pushy Patsy Ramsey forcing her overpriced daughter into the spotlight? Movies, cars, music, dress, and now games are becoming more about our rehearsed thans than original explorations of entertainment.

The old games, in their day, were great. In fact, I spent hours in the dingy local arcade, crafting my Gologo hit-miss ratio, hanging at the run-down K-Mart just because they had an Atari 2600 illuminating their trashy customers with the glow of *Space Invaders*. Even the local Sears workers knew me as that dirty kid who "looks homeless," just because I often spent the night sleeping on their floor, waiting for IntelliVision baseball to be turned on for the next day.

I embrace the classics, which are classics for a reason. They are our link to a glorious past, and deserve to remain so. So remember the time and hold it high, but don't remake *Citizen Kane* with Anna Nicole Smith as Susan Alexander and a new subplot about Jed Leyland's struggle to get off crack. Cherish the memories, but don't twist your rose-colored past into a hideous, hot pink future. You'll really regret it when Hasbro announces *Deer Hunter: 2030*.

— MIKE "CRANKY OLD MAN" MORRISSEY

SECOND PERSON

So, new boy, what crawled up your butt and died? (Maybe it was *Dig Dug 3D*.) The entire point of playing games is to have fun, not wonder how old the source material is. Nobody but stodgy critics complain when Hollywood remakes some old movie, but if Hasbro or some other company wants to bring a classic out of the stone age, then suddenly the entire game industry is going to hell in Ms. Pacman's handbasket.

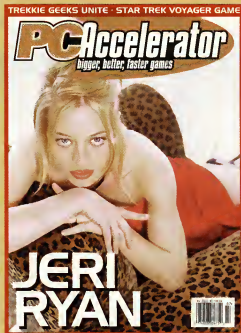
Granted, the new *Frogger* sucks — I can't deny that — but what about an upcoming game like *Sinistar Unleashed* that expands on the original idea in exciting new ways? Do you think Richard Garriott is working the retro angle by releasing yet another *Ultima* game? Sorry, kiddies, Mario got his start in *Donkey Kong* so that new 3D remake must be crap. Link to a glorious past, my bit-mapped ass! Mike, my cranky old ignorant slut, go rot your brain with an emulator. I'll be in the present if you need me.

— CHUCK "CLASSIC SCHMASSIC" OSBORN

NEXT MONTH?

♦♦♦ You Will Be Ass-iliated

The PCXL universe braces for the arrival of Jeri Ryan and an exclusive look at the new *Star Trek: Voyager* game, *Elite Force*. High-heels, skin-tight polyester jumpsuits, and the *Quake III* engine mix it up for the most Borg-alicious adventure yet.



● Resistance Is Peurile

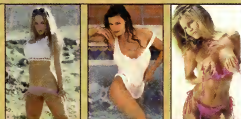
Paying \$70 for a hunk of plastic crap controller is a crime against nature. Don't be fooled by every new FragBlaster XL3000 or X-Treme Performance Hyperwheel that hits the street — check out PCXL's Ultimate Gaming Peripheral Guide and find out whether they're trash or worth your cash.

● Beat Us Up, Scotty!

Quake III has beamed down, smacked our collective asses, and made us roll over and beg for more. Learn more about Id's new sequel than you ever thought humanly possible in our exclusive look at the game destined to become "the *Quake III* of first-person shooters."

● Is That A Tribble In Your Pocket?

PCXL's special supplement, *Star Trek Outsider*, boldly goes in search of the amazing secrets behind James "Scotty" Doohan's painful fight with pork rind addiction. Check out: "Is he or isn't he?", and rumored plans to resurrect DeForest Kelly in the next feature film. All this and totally irrelevant pictures of semi-nude women like those pictured below.



A photograph of a person in a Star Wars costume, specifically a Tusken Raider, jumping over a set of turnstiles in a subway station. The person is wearing a brown, textured jumpsuit with a circular emblem on the chest, a red bandana, and a feathered headdress. They are in mid-air, with arms outstretched. The background shows other people and the interior of the subway station.

Ken Slater puts the finishing touches
on five years of intense training.

Ken Slater
9:47a.m.
September 18, 1999
Southbound Terminal



Journey through 7 environments including an opulent Persian palace, a fantastic dirigible, and Tibetan cliffs.



Stealth and agility are your only hope against hundreds of traps like scythes, guillotines and spring-load spikes.



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Prince of Persia® 3D

Is it in you?



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Go to <http://pcx.ign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 63



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